

A COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF THE INFLUENCE THE BOYS & GIRLS  
CLUB AND KEYSTONE CLUB PROGRAMS HAD ON ALUMNI IN REGARDS TO  
CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES

A Thesis

by

TAMRA ANN SWIGERT

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

May 2008

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Barry L. Boyd
Committee Members,	Gary E. Briers
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## ABSTRACT

A Comparative Evaluation of the Influence of the Boys & Girls Club and Keystone Club Programs Had on Alumni in Regards to Career and Life Experiences. (May 2008)

Tamra Ann Swigert, B.S., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Barry L. Boyd

Boys and Girls Club kept me out of prison. It kept me focused in school and on life; and has made me a productive citizen in the society. (Boys & Girls Club alum)

This qualitative study evaluated and compared the influence of the Boys & Girls Club and Keystone Club programs on alumni in regards to their career and life experiences. Data were collected through personal interviews of each alumnus in the study. Each interview focused on the alumni's experiences and benefits gained in either the six core areas of the Keystone Club program or the five core areas in which Boys & Girls Club members participate.

The researcher asked staff from the Bryan and College Station Clubs to identify alumni for whom they still had contact information and would be likely to participate. The researcher then used the naturalistic inquiry approach to gather information regarding the experiences and benefits of alumni's participation in the Keystone Club

and Boys & Girls Club programs. The sample of convenience included 14 individuals who had participated in either program in the cities of Bryan or College Station, Texas.

The major findings of the study were as follows: 1) All Boys & Girls Club alumni and Keystone Club alumni learned leadership skills through their participation in the programs; 2) All Boys & Girls Club alumni and Keystone Club alumni learned to interact with various cultures as a result of their exposure to the programs; 3) A greater number of alumni from the Keystone Club described “goal setting” as a key lesson than did alumni from the Boys & Girls Club; 4) Alumni from the Keystone Club are more likely than the alumni from the Boys & Girls Club to give back to their community.

Recommendations for the clubs include the implementation of community service projects in the Boys & Girls Club program as well as helping youth identify and set goals. For the Keystone Club program, a Job Shadow Day and a College Student Shadow Day were both recommended to help students identify future careers and explore higher education.

## DEDICATION

### **To Mom and Dad...**

Thank you for always believing in me, encouraging me, and giving me an example to live by. You are my true heroes!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the encouragement, support, and love from my colleagues, friends, and family.

I would like to first thank God for allowing me this great opportunity to continue my education. He gave me the courage, strength and endurance even when I did not think it was possible. “For I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength” Philippians 4:16.

A huge thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Boyd, and to my committee members, Dr. Briers and Dr. Albrecht, for their guidance and support throughout the entire research process. They have been a great blessing to me.

This study of the Boys & Girls Club alumni would not have been possible without the support of the entire Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley staff, especially Ron Rolett, who encouraged me to continue my education and to study the impact of the Club.

To all the alumni who participated in this study, you are a living example and walking proof that the Boys & Girls Club continues to make a difference in the lives of youth. Thank you for your participation, cooperation, and passion in sharing your experiences with me. More than anything, I thank you for giving the current and future Club members examples to live by, for you are their role models!

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for encouraging me the past two years. For giving me times of relaxation and fun, and understanding when my time

was limited with each one of you. Your continuous prayers and encouraging notes have been a tremendous blessing during this time. Thank you for always believing in me!

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In 1906, three women in Boston, Massachusetts opened their doors to the boys in their neighborhood. The women prepared snacks and activities for the boys to participate in order to keep them off the streets, out of trouble, and in a safe place. This was the beginning of the first Boys Club of America. Over the next 100 years, the Club and its successful programs would spread to more than 3,900 locations across the world benefiting boys and girls, ages six to eighteen (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2005). Boys & Girls Clubs of America produces quality educational programs for children and youth. Clubs offer diversified programs in five core program areas: 1) character and leadership development; 2) education and career exploration; 3) health and life skills; 4) the arts; and 5) sports, fitness, and recreation (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2005).

The Boys & Girls Clubs not only offer programs for young children, but also a variety of teen programs including the Keystone Club. The Keystone Club is a voluntary program that builds character in teens by challenging youth to “develop many virtues and characteristics of positive, ethical leaders” (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005, p. 4). The purpose of the Keystone Club is to “create and maintain high standards of character and citizenship, health and education in order for teens to grow to become responsible, productive adults” (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005, p. 4). Teens learn leadership and communication skills along with time management, event planning,

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This thesis follows the style of the *Journal of Leadership Education*.

and the importance of helping others in their community.

Each Keystone Club goes through a national chartering process developed and recognized by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. By being chartered, Keystone Clubs have access to local, regional, and national Keystone Club conferences through which members can receive special recognition and medallions for their participation. The Boys & Girls Clubs of America offer four charter levels. The beginning level is the General Membership level which is good for newly formed Keystone Clubs. Additional levels are Bronze, Silver, and Gold memberships. Each charter level is built on the previous level, and Clubs are asked to participate and submit more information to obtain the higher level (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005).

Since Keystone Club's inception in 1964, thousands of teens have participated in this program (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005). Each year, Keystone Clubs are challenged to implement a "national project addressing key social issues such as: election drives and voters [sic] registration drives, homelessness, the elderly, blood and organ drives, and the environment" (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005, p. 6). Local Keystone Clubs and their youth boards develop special events, fundraisers, and projects to tie in with the annual national Keystone Club issue developed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Keystone Clubs offer teens the ability to lead an important initiative in their community; one that helps not only their peers and their community, but also themselves. Keystone Clubs implement activities in the following six core areas:

1. **Service to Club and Community:** Service opportunities allow Keystoners to learn the responsibilities of being an active citizen in the community. It also allows them to experience the satisfaction of helping those in their community. Service projects might include holiday celebrations, food bank drives, club carnivals, neighborhood clean ups, and/or events for the elderly. (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005)
2. **Character and Leadership Development:** Members of the Keystone Club learn to be ethical leaders and to have good character by engaging in projects and activities that benefit their community. Character and leadership skills developed through the Keystone Club include trustworthiness, patience, organization, reliability, sense of humor, listening skills, and communication skills (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005).
3. **Education and Career Exploration:** Opportunities are given to Keystoners to explore potential educational and career paths for their future. Activities include career and college fairs, résumé building, and goal setting. Activities involving education and career exploration include college tours, 4-H, Job Shadow Day, SAT preparation classes, and presentation by career professionals (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005).
4. **Free Enterprise:** Free enterprise, according to the TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, is “the freedom of private business to operate competitively for profit” (2005, p. 26). Keystoners learn how to develop and implement fundraisers, money management, and record keeping and how to sell effectively. Free

enterprise activities include fundraising projects such as raffle drawings and Club businesses that are ongoing such as concession stand sales.

5. **Unity:** Keystoneers acquire the “human relation skills needed to understand, if not appreciate, individuals different from ourselves in a non-judgmental manner” (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005, p. 29). Unity activities include a multicultural carnival or awareness program, wheelchair basketball tournament, and team building programs.
6. **Social Recreation:** Keystone Clubs utilize social recreation activities as “a teaching tool that fosters positive group dynamics and social interaction” (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005, p. 30). Social recreation includes sports activities, social activities, and field trips.

This study looked at each of the core areas of the Keystone Club program and the perceived impact the program had on alumni in their current career path, civic responsibilities, and life experiences.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In 2001, the Independent Sector conducted a study of more than 4,000 adults. This study, *Engaging Youth in Lifelong Services*, looked at youth service and the continuation of service throughout the lives of those youth. Major findings in this study included the following:

- Forty-four percent of adults volunteer and two-thirds of these volunteers began volunteering their time when they were young.

- Adults who began volunteering as youth are twice as likely to volunteer as those who did not volunteer when they were younger.
- In every income and age group, those who volunteered as youth give and volunteer more [hours] than those who did not.
- Those who volunteered as youth and whose parents volunteered were the most generous adults in giving time. (Independent Sector, 2006, p. 2)

These findings are important because nonprofits now know that the youth who volunteered at their organization are more likely to continue to volunteer and give monetarily to their causes in the future. From this study, the Independent Sector found that volunteering as a youth is important to volunteerism as an adult. The Keystone Club focuses on service to the community by encouraging youth to volunteer in a variety of service activities.

The Keystone Club program is a successful program involving high school aged students. It has been a part of the Boys & Girls Clubs programming for more than 40 years. The Keystone Club in Bryan, Texas was chartered in 1990 and in College Station, Texas in 2004. All Boys & Girls Club members participate in the Youth Development Outcome Measurement Tool Kit, which allows staff to know whether programs are successfully influencing the youth of their club (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2007b). However, no study has been conducted with local alumni of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley or Keystone Club programs. The Keystone Club program is a nationally recognized program with thousands of participants involved each year. It is crucial that the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and club professionals,



donors, and current club members know that there are long-term benefits of Keystone Club membership. By having this information, Club professionals will be able to use the information to garner new Keystone Club funding from foundations and donors, as well as change the program to accommodate local club and member needs.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The Keystone Club is a program developed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America to prepare young teens for life after high school. It is essential for teens to develop leadership and communication skills, learn how to work with people of different backgrounds, learn to set goals and accomplish them, and learn the importance of giving back to their community (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005; Scales, Benson, & Leffert, 2000). Through programs such as the Keystone Club, Boys & Girls Club members have the opportunity to invest their time and talents to a worthwhile cause. A cause to help the community and themselves by engaging in leadership roles they might not have through their school activities. The results of this study will be shared with the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley, and Boys & Girls Clubs of America. It is important for club professionals, members, alumni, and donors to know the impact the Keystone Club program has on teens. Not only will it help professionals to see the benefits but it also will help recruit more teens to participate in the future.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate and compare the experiences of selected Boys & Girls Club alumni with those alumni who also participated in the Keystone Club program. Specifically, the study examined the development of the

alumni's leadership skills, character, and participation in community affairs. Personal interviews were used to collect data. The interview questions focused on the benefits gained in each of the six core areas of the Keystone Club program and the five core areas in which Boys & Girls Club members participated.

### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

The specific objectives guiding this study were:

1. Determine current demographics of alumni of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley and Keystone Club programs.
2. Determine the benefits gained through the six core areas of the Keystone Club program:
  - Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's service to club and community;
  - Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's character and leadership development;
  - Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's education and career exploration;
  - Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's unity;
  - Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's free enterprise;
  - Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's social recreation.

3. Determine the benefits gained through the five core areas of the Boys & Girls

Club:

- Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's service to club and community;
- Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's character and leadership development;
- Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's education and career path;
- Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's life skills;
- Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's social recreation;

4. Compare and contrast the impact of Boys & Girls Club programs on Boys & Girls Club alumni and Keystone Club alumni.

## **THEORETICAL BASE FOR STUDY**

As a theoretical base for this study, the researcher looked at the 40 Developmental Assets Model developed by the Search Institute (2004). The model incorporates assets comparable to the core areas of the Keystone Club and Boys & Girls Club.

The assets model is composed of forty assets that are considered necessary for youth to move along a successful path to adulthood. The model is split evenly into two primary sections, twenty external assets, and twenty internal assets (Search Institute,

2004). The Search Institute has provided evidence of a relationship between the number of assets a young person has and his/her positive attitudes and behaviors. “For example, 49% of young people who indicate they have 0 to 10 of the 40 assets are likely to engage in problem alcohol use as opposed to only 3% of young people with 31 to 40 assets. Conversely, 47% of young people with 31 to 40 assets succeed in school while only 8% of those with 0 to 10 assets do so” (Witt & Caldwell, 2005, p. 9). The more assets a youth has the more successful they are in life. Likewise, the fewer assets a person has, the more likely they are to be involved in violence, crime, and/or sexual activity.

The 40 Developmental Assets consists of twenty external assets in four categories: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Likewise, the internal assets are split into four categories: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Table 1 lists the 40 developmental assets in detail.

Scales, Benson, and Leffert (2000) studied seven thriving indicators based on the 40 developmental assets model. The seven indicators are school success, leadership, helping others, maintenance of physical health, delay of gratification, valuing diversity, and overcoming adversity. Related to the developmental assets, Scales, Benson, and Leffert (2000) reported that “leadership opportunities are associated with positive mental health, and helping others may contribute to self-esteem” (p. 28). Five of the seven thriving indicators are core areas for the Keystone Club, those being school success, leadership, helping others, maintenance of physical health, and valuing diversity. With

that in mind, the 40 Developmental Assets model is an appropriate model to base this study.

Table 1. *Search Institute 40 Developmental Assets*

	Category	Asset Name
External Assets	Support	1. Family Support
		2. Positive Family Communication
		3. Other Adult Relationships*
		4. Caring Neighborhood*
		5. Caring School Climate
		6. Parent Involvement in Schooling
	Empowerment	7. Community Values Youth*
		8. Youth as Resources*
		9. Service to Others*
		10. Safety*
	Boundaries & Expectations	11. Family Boundaries
		12. School Boundaries
		13. Neighborhood Boundaries
		14. Adult Role Models*
		15. Positive Peer Influence*
		16. High Expectations*
	Constructive Use of Time	17. Creative Activities*
		18. Youth Programs*
		19. Religious Community
		20. Time at Home

(Search Institute, 2004)

Table 1. (*continued*)

	Category	Asset Name
Internal Assets	Commitment to Learning	21. Achievement Motivation*
		22. School Engagement*
		23. Homework*
		24. Bonding to School*
		25. Reading for Pleasure*
	Positive Values	26. Caring*
		27. Equality and Social Justice
		28. Integrity
		29. Honesty*
		30. Responsibility*
		31. Restraint*
	Social Competencies	32. Planning and Decision Making*
		33. Interpersonal Competence*
		34. Cultural Competence*
		35. Resistance Skills*
		36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution*
	Positive Identity	37. Personal Power*
		38. Self-Esteem*
		39. Sense of Purpose*
		40. Positive View of Personal Future*

(Search Institute, 2004)

\* *Developmental Assets associated with the Boys & Girls Clubs and Keystone Club Programs*

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The specific research questions guiding this study were:

1. Does the Keystone Club program impact the development of leadership skills and character in youth?
2. Does the Keystone Club program influence members in their career path and community investments?
3. Is the Keystone Club program a successful program?
4. Does the Boys & Girls Club impact alumni in the same way as the Keystone Club program?

## **DELIMITATIONS**

This study was delimited to seven Keystone Club alumni and seven Boys & Girls Club alumni. An interview questionnaire was developed for the study, and data were collected July 1, 2007, through September 15, 2007. Each participant gave permission to be recorded during the interview.

## **LIMITATIONS**

1. Alumni's participation, experiences, and lessons learned through the Keystone Club will vary between Clubs. Advisors, staff, and volunteers who work in the Clubs play a critical role in the impact of such programs. However, the Keystone Club is a national program with its own manual, lessons, and objectives for the teens to work towards and accomplish.

2. Alumni who participated in the Keystone Club during its initial years may not have received the same benefits of the program as those in recent years.
3. Information collected from this study regarding the six core areas may be unique to only the Keystone Clubs located at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley and therefore should not be generalized to other Keystone Clubs.

### **BASIC ASSUMPTIONS**

It is assumed by the researcher that the personal examples, anecdotes, and experiences gained through the Keystone Club were truthfully and accurately described to the researcher.

### **DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

Boys & Girls Club Alumni: Former Boys & Girls Club members who did not participate in the Keystone Club program.

Boys & Girls Clubs: A non-profit organization focusing on youth ages 6 to 18. All programs and activities implemented by the Club relate to the five core program areas.

Career Path: The educational and career experiences that alumni followed after their membership from the Boys & Girls Club program ended.



Civic Responsibilities: Alumni's engagement in community activities such as volunteer work, members of non-profit boards, donations, and involvement in Boys & Girls Clubs.

Core Program Areas: Character and Leadership Development, The Arts, Health and Life Skills, Education and Career Exploration, and Sports, Fitness, and Recreation.

Ethical Leaders: Ethical leaders is considered to be “someone of good character, who earns and commands the respect of peers as they guide and direct others in an ethical fashion while working to accomplish mutually set goals” (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005, p. 21).

Keystone Club Alumni: Former Boys & Girls Club members who also participated in the Keystone Club program during their high school years.

Keystone Club: Chartered leadership and service clubs for boys and girls ages 14 to 18.

Keystoners: Club members who participate in the Keystone Club program.

Youth Development Outcome Measurement Tool Kit: A web-based youth survey that “helps Boys & Girls Clubs collect and analyze information about whether they [the Club and staff] are making a significant, positive difference in members’ lives” (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2007b, para. 6). The tool kit is available only to Club professionals and volunteers.

Unity: The Keystone Club focuses on Unity as one of their core areas of the program. “Unity emphasizes the need for Keystoneers to acquire the human relation skills needed to understand, if not appreciate, individuals different from ourselves in a non-judgmental manner” (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005, p. 29).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Boys & Girls Club members who participate in the Keystone Club program receive specific training and guidance on character, leadership and communication skills, money management, team work, career exploration, and community involvement. Keystone Club members voluntarily join the program because of its ties to helping the community. The skills acquired through Keystone Club can help youth gain valuable experiences for their future, shaping them into successful and productive citizens.

#### **BOYS & GIRLS CLUB ALUMNI STUDY**

In 2007, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America conducted a national survey of 1,014 alumni (2007a). Alumni participated in either an online survey or via telephone. In the survey, the alumni reported that the Boys & Girls Club had “both an immediate and long-lasting impact on their lives” (2007a, para.4). Key findings in this study included:

- Up 5% from 1999, 57% of alumni said the Club saved their life
- Overall, 91% are satisfied with their adult life
- 61% of alumni became more committed to their education because of the Boys & Girls Clubs
- 51% achieved a higher level of education than they thought possible because of their Club (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2007a, para. 5).

More specifically, results from this study regarding attitudes toward civic engagement the “majority of the Club alumni believe it important to be a good citizen and are actively involved in their community” (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2007c, para. 3). Approximately 48% of those interviewed said that the Boys & Girls Club attributed to their participation in service activities and desire to give back to the community (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2007c).

The study also researched the impact the club staff had on the character development of alumni. 85% of the alumni said they know right from wrong, 82% have self-confidence, 77% learned good leadership skills, 67% said they had goals and aspirations, and 67% said they had the ability to avoid difficulty with the law (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2007c).

## **PROBLEMS YOUTH FACE**

In 2005, the national Keystone Club project was asked to develop a youth-led initiative and survey to distribute to other Keystone Club teens across America in hopes of finding out key issues teens in America face. This report, titled *Youth Report to America*, surveyed 46,000 teens ages 13 to 18 in the communities with local Keystone Clubs (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2005). The survey gathered information regarding four key areas: teen outlook (how teens view their future), relationships, teen issues, and their views of America.

Forty percent of youth clearly identified drugs and alcohol as a significant problem facing their peers and neighborhoods (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2005).

Other problems facing the youth are violence (21%) and poverty (15%). Teens are aware of the problems facing America, especially those among their peers. It is crucial for teens that are at-risk for participation in such behaviors to have a place to go instead of being on the streets where they can receive positive influence.

### **SERVICE TO CLUB AND COMMUNITY**

An underlying theme in the research for youth volunteers is the learning of altruistic behaviors at an early age. Wolfe (1998) defines altruism as all “social behavior carried out to achieve positive outcomes for another rather than for the self” (p. 321). Wolfe also claims that altruistic behaviors are “learned through others in the course of everyday life” (1998, p. 321). Youth learn altruistic behaviors at an early age through their volunteer work, their schools, and their peers who volunteer as well. Lenore and Franco’s study, *Empowering Youths to Build Community through Service*, focused on youths’ attitudes toward community service. They state that of the 278 youth surveyed in Orange County, California, 80% would have recruited their peers to participate (Lenore & Franco, 1999). A large majority of the youth were willing to recruit other youth to participate in altruistic acts; a step in learning altruistic behavior. Of those who did not participate in service, 34% said they would if they did not have to do it alone. This means youth are often influenced by other youth to participate in service opportunities as well as to become life-long givers. Even though some youth may participate in service acts to fill a scholastic requirement, they are engaging in altruistic

behaviors. Their motivations may start as a school requirement or class project, but youth could end up being grateful for the experience and the opportunity to grow.

Mueller (2005) reported that volunteering especially benefits at-risk youth. Youth who tend to be on the receiving end of volunteering and donations “can easily develop the institutional mentality-a dependence on adults and the services rendered” (p. 19). Volunteering gives the youth the opportunity to discover their own talents and skills and gives them the chance to become the giver instead of the receiver.

## **CHARACTER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

In 2003, Bruce studied 4-H state council members and the skills acquired through the 4-H program. In her study, Bruce interviewed 14 former state 4-H council members and one former council advisor. From this study, she found that the council members learned leadership skills through their membership in 4-H and continued to gain knowledge of leadership during their council years (Bruce, 2003). Bruce also concluded that the council members continued their participation and service with 4-H after their council years concluded. In relation to the Boys & Girls Club, Bruce studied alumni to determine leadership skills gained through 4-H and continued service in their community.

In 2005, Radhakrishna reported in his study, *Influence of 4-H Programs on Former 4-H Members' Career and Life Experiences*, that alumni “felt that their 4-H experiences greatly contributed to developing group interaction skills, leadership skills, and decision making skills” (p. 82). The alumni study also indicated that 4-H

participation influenced alumni's completion of high school, career, higher education, community involvement, and leadership responsibilities. Alumni "strongly agreed that knowledge and skills gained in 4-H continued to benefit them in their adult lives" (Radhakrishna, 2005, p. 85).

In 1997, Jones conducted a study of youth in Canada titled *Youth Volunteering on the Rise*. The number of youth volunteering in Canada increased by 15% between 1987 and 1997, a significant increase compared to the population at-large (Jones, 2000). In this study, Jones looked at the benefits for youth related to volunteering. He reported the greatest benefits to students were "improvement in interpersonal skills, followed by communication skills, knowledge, organizational and managerial skills, fundraising skills, technical or office skills, and other skills or knowledge" (Jones, 2000, p. 41). The life-skills reported in Jones' findings are everyday skills that all people, regardless of age, should know. Through their volunteer opportunities, the youth are getting their second education outside of school. They are putting what they have learned in the classroom into action and expanding their horizons into new and unfamiliar territories.

According to the *Treasure of the Trail, Youth as Volunteers* study conducted in 1993, youth reported that volunteering taught them to respect others, to be helpful and to be kind (Mueller, 2005). Through their volunteering, they "gained satisfaction from helping others" as well as "developed new social skills, strengthening decision making, and nurturing an ethic of civic responsibility" (Mueller, 2005, p. 18). Youth volunteers are not only gaining valuable work experience, but they are also learning to work with

others and to respect their peers. Both of which, are important qualities in being a successful leader.

Henderson (1990) wrote about key benefits to youth volunteering in her book, *What Would We Do Without You? A Guide to Volunteer Activities for Kids*. The benefits she mentioned were:

- Learning new skills or discovering they have a knack for a certain type of work
- Gaining practical experiences in the career they are thinking about pursuing
- Developing leadership skills
- Developing realistic perceptions (Henderson, 1990)

Henderson points out that not only are the youth developing their leadership skills but they are also discovering what they are good at doing (1990). They are developing passions for life. One student might have a dream of being a teacher but learn through their volunteer experience that they want to be a pediatrician instead. Volunteering helps youth define who they are, who they want to be, where they want to go, and it begins to develop their character. It enables them to explore a field they might not have considered as a career possibility. Volunteering gives youth the chance to explore new possibilities. In my opinion, if youth volunteer in different careers, it can help them go into college with a focus and an idea of what they want to study, allowing them to complete their education in a focused, passionate, and timely manner.



## **EDUCATION AND CAREER EXPLORATION**

In 1998, colleagues from the University of Minnesota conducted a study titled *Volunteerism in Adolescence: A Process Perspective* (Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, & Snyder, 1998). In this study, they found that “those adolescents who become involved in volunteer activities have higher educational plans and aspirations, higher grade point averages, higher academic self-esteem, and a higher intrinsic motivation toward school work” (Johnson et al., 1998, p. 309). Not only do they tend to excel in their high school and higher education academia, but according to the study the youth who engage in altruistic acts at an early age form an altruistic identity and are “likely to be retained over time and increase the likelihood of engaging in pro-social behavior later in life” (Johnson et al., 1998, p. 311). The youth are learning life-long skills, and a life-long passion for giving back and helping others. By learning this altruistic behavior at an early age, the youth continue to take part in their community.

## **UNITY**

According to the 2000 United States Census, the United States is becoming more diverse regarding ethnicity (United States Census, 2000). Because of this, it is important for youth to learn how to embrace people of different cultures and backgrounds. Unity between youth is crucial for them to be able to work together in the future, especially in the workplace.

In 2000, Billig researched the benefits gained by students who participated in service-learning. Throughout her study, Billig found that teens who participated in

service-learning were able to relate to culturally diverse groups (2000). The students' interaction with their peers and their leaders helped them to "increase their awareness of cultural differences and in their attitudes toward helping others" (Billig, 2000, p. 661). The student volunteers became "more dependable and felt more comfortable communicating with ethnically diverse groups" (Billig, 2000, p. 661).

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America has a specific program called "Youth for Unity" that focuses on educating teens on diversity. The key themes for the program are for youth to "see themselves as unique and special individuals, understand our society's diversity, recognize bias and unfairness, and take personal leadership in confronting bias" (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, n.d., p. 4). Quinn focused her research on best practices of youth programs and specific themes programs should incorporate (1999). One best practice Quinn listed encouraged programs and advisors to "recognize, value, and respond to the diverse backgrounds and experiences among young adolescents in contemporary America" (1999, p. 106).

## **FREE ENTERPRISE**

Teens today graduate from high school with limited knowledge of the real world and how to survive in it (Koehler, Lawroski, & Bischoff, 1995). Upon graduation from high school, teens are likely to make significant financial decisions regarding housing, utilities, furniture, food, and insurance (Koehler et al., 1995). But are they ready to make these types of decisions? In 1991, the Consumer Federation of America and the American Express Company tested seniors in high school across the nation on financial

matters. The teens correctly answered “42% of 52 questions about banking, auto insurance, housing, cars, credit, and food” (Danes, Huddleston-Casas, & Boyce, 1999, p. 28). More than 50% of students answered questions regarding financial matters incorrectly. With this in mind, teens need additional education regarding finances prior to graduation.

Danes, Huddleston-Casas, and Boyce evaluated a new financial planning curriculum for teens in 1999. The program’s main goal was to “increase the financial planning literacy of teens” (Danes et al., 1999, p. 29) by providing an introduction of financial planning and explaining the importance of saving and investing money. After Danes, Huddleston-Casas, and Boyce conducted a pre/post test and a three month follow-up test on the students’ knowledge of financial matters, she concluded that the program had a ‘positive impact on students’ financial knowledge, behavior, and self-efficacy’ (1999, p. 37). Although the study focused on personal finances, the basics of managing money can be applied to business finances as well.

According to a study by Acosta and Holt, juniors and seniors in high school are more interested in “jobs, careers, and options after high school” (1991, p. 2). During youth’s junior and senior years, teens are not as interested in fashion, and dating, but are more interested in life after graduation and how to prepare for it. The study indicated that students are somewhat interested in topics concerning public speaking, leadership, and money management (Acosta & Holt, 1991). Teens today, from this study, would like to learn more about life after graduation, money management, career possibilities,

and leadership; this is consistent with core areas found in the Boys & Girls Club and Keystone Club programs.

The sad fact is that most children today receive no formal education about business and free enterprise. Our schools aren't required to teach it and most teachers don't understand it themselves. Unless we start today to correct this situation, the free enterprise system will continue to be at risk tomorrow.

(DeBerg, C. & Thornton, K., 1999, p.2)

In 1998, a new program focusing on teaching entrepreneurship to teens was implemented by a group called Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE). The program was delivered to 32 at-risk youth during the summer of 1998 as a collaboration between California State University, Chico and Butte County. In this program, students learned a range of topics including the stock market, business plans, financial statements, starting your own business, sole proprietorship, and much more (DeBerg, C. & Thornton, K., 1999). Results from this study indicated that the program had a positive impact on the students' knowledge of business and economic concepts.

## **SOCIAL RECREATION**

Social recreation is more than a time to 'hang out' with friends and play games. Social recreation is a time for young people to get to know each other, break out of their comfort zones and to develop new or improve on their current character skills. For many members of the Keystone Club, this social recreational period is the only time they are able to 'branch out' and discover new activities. With the increasing costs to

participate in sports programs and the limited access to cultural museums, youth are turning to organizations to help them experience such opportunities (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005).

Through participation in sports programs, Fraser-Thomas found that youth gain many benefits regarding physical development, psychological development, social development, and intellectual development (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005, p. 23). The following page describes Fraser-Thomas' benefits gained through sports programs.

#### *Physical Development*

- “Adolescents involved in regular physical activity are less likely to smoke than adolescents not involved in regular activity”
- Active youth are less likely to develop diseases later in life such as heart disease, stroke, depression, and diabetes.
- The physical activity involved in sports programs help “facilitate normal growth and development in children and adolescents.”

#### *Psychological Development*

- “Sport and physical activity offer youth opportunities to experience challenge, fun, and enjoyment, while increasing their self-esteem and decreasing their stress.” (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005, p. 24)

#### *Social Development*

- Social activities in youth help develop leadership skills, positive peer relationships, and citizenship.

- Sports have been “positively correlated with adult career achievement and negatively correlated with school dropout and delinquent behavior.” (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005, p. 25)
- Sport also builds unity among team members, and promotes skills of cooperation, responsibility, and self-control. (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005)

### *Intellectual Development*

- Youth’s involvement in sports activities also positively influences school grades, attendance, and educational aspirations in teens (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Frazer-Thomas, Côté, and Deakin’s research indicates that social recreational activities help in all aspects of a child’s development. Not only does it help with their development but by having social recreation activities in youth organizations it also gives youth opportunities to participate in activities they normally would not due to rising costs.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

For this study, the researcher used the naturalistic inquiry approach to gathering information regarding the experiences and benefits by alumni's participation in the Boys & Girls Club and Keystone Club programs. "Naturalistic research seeks to maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about the content" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 33). The methods used will closely follow those used by Bruce in her study of Texas 4-H Council members in 2003.

#### **SAMPLE IDENTIFICATION**

In order to retrieve the specific information regarding the Keystone Club, the researcher used purposive sampling to obtain subjects for the study. "Purposive and directive sampling through human instrumentation increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researchers ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 82). The researcher used purposive sampling to intentionally interview participants that met requirements for the study. For example, Boys & Girls Club alumni and Keystone Club alumni from Bryan and College Station, Texas were selected for the study. In this study, the researcher asked Boys & Girls Club staff from Bryan and College Station to identify alumni for whom they still had contact information and would be likely to participate in the research. This was beneficial as the researcher was able to save both time and effort in having to locate alumni and most of the alumni still lived locally.

An email was distributed to staff at two Club units in Bryan and College Station, Texas. The email asked the staff to identify former Boys & Girls Club members and former Keystone Club members who would be willing to participate in a study of the program (Appendix B). A total of forty Boys & Girls Club and Keystone Club alumni were collected to be contacted for the study.

## **DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The researcher used the structural interview method to collect data on the alumni's experiences and benefits gained through the regular Boys & Girls Club program as well as the Keystone Club program. All alumni were contacted initially by email or by phone (Appendix B) depending on the contact information provided by the Boys & Girls Club staff member. Alumni were asked to participate in the research study and to schedule an interview to be conducted either in person or by telephone. Participation in the interview was voluntary. Each alumnus was informed of their rights as human subjects in the research and was asked to sign a consent form acknowledging their voluntary participation and approval to use a recording device. A total of seven Keystone Club alumni and seven Boys & Girls Club alumni were interviewed. The interviews stopped after the data being collected started to repeat for each participant. The researcher coded all interviews to establish confidentiality. In this study, the researcher coded male participants as (M) and female participants as (F). In addition, interviews were coded to identify those alumni who participated in the Keystone Club



program: Yes Keystone (YK) or No Keystone (NK). Table 2 lists all the codes for the alumni who participated in this study.

Table 2. *Alumni Codes*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Male/Female</b>	<b>Keystone Club?</b>	<b>Participant #</b>
<b>MNK1</b>	Male	No Keystone	1
<b>FYK2</b>	Female	Yes Keystone	2
<b>FYK3</b>	Female	Yes Keystone	3
<b>MYK4</b>	Male	Yes Keystone	4
<b>MNK5</b>	Male	No Keystone	5
<b>MNK6</b>	Male	No Keystone	6
<b>MNK7</b>	Male	No Keystone	7
<b>FYK8</b>	Female	Yes Keystone	8
<b>MYK9</b>	Male	Yes Keystone	9
<b>MNK10</b>	Male	No Keystone	10
<b>MNK11</b>	Male	No Keystone	11
<b>FYK12</b>	Female	Yes Keystone	12
<b>FNK13</b>	Female	No Keystone	13
<b>MYK14</b>	Male	Yes Keystone	14

Interview questions were designed to elicit responses about the five core areas of the Boys & Girls Club program and the six core areas of the Keystone Club program. The questions were designed by the researcher and reviewed by a panel of experts in youth development for content and face validity. The list of interview questions can be found in Appendix A and the email to the Boys & Girls Club staff requesting alumni contacts can be found in Appendix B.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis was conducted utilizing the methods described in Bruce's study (2003). Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen describes qualitative data analysis as an ongoing process, one that starts the minute you start your collection methods, for example starting with the interviews (1993). During the data analysis, the researcher continues to refine the themes of the interviews in order to reach the research goals. Continually refining and analyzing the information allows the researcher to make improvements and validate the study along the way. The data analysis method used by the researcher was adopted from Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method for naturalistic inquiry.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the constant comparative method helps the researcher derive a theory from the data collected. Lincoln and Guba describe four techniques in analyzing the data: The first is to compare incidents applicable to each category. Through the sorting of data by index cards or even computers, the researcher's incidents emerges into categories of similar data. For each new set of incidents in a report, the researcher compares the data to the previous incident and its category. If the incident matches the category, it is marked as the same category; if it does not, the incident is assigned a new category. This process is continued until all incidents are placed into categories (Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E., 1985).

Second, Lincoln and Guba explain that the researcher needs to integrate categories and their properties. The researcher does this by comparing properties (or rules by which incidents fit into the categories) instead of comparing incidents. "The

comparison shifts from a more or less intuitive ‘look-alikeness’ or ‘feel-alikeness’ judgment to a judgment of whether a new incident exhibits the category properties that have been tentatively identified” (Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E., 1985, p. 342).

Thirdly, Lincoln and Guba say that researchers need to delimit the theory. At this point in the analysis, the researcher makes fewer changes to the categories and properties of the incidents. Through this process, the original set of categories is reduced in size because of the integration of the data and the categories are well saturated because they are well-defined (1985).

The final step in the process is writing the theory, taking what the researcher has categorized, forming theories to answer the researcher’s objectives and research question. This process puts the theories discovered onto paper.

To further describe in detail the constant comparative analysis, the researcher followed the following outline:

Utilization of Data – Researcher transcribed the recorded interviews and began coding the transcripts to identify themes in the participants’ responses. Themes were then printed on index cards. All index cards were coded to correspond with the interview code for audit purposes (Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E., 1985).

Categorization of Units – The researcher sorted the data and put the cards into categories or common themes. Through this sorting method, main themes emerged from the information collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Merging Categories – During this stage, themes became more prominent and similar themes were collapsed. At this point there was less movement of units of information between themes (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Defining the Construction – The researcher reduced the remaining categories into main themes that became the final construct of the study. Some categories were then distributed into the remaining categories during this phase (Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E., 1985).

Journaling – Journaling occurred throughout the entire study. The researcher kept a journal of decisions and situations regarding the study. The researcher also kept a reflexive journal throughout the study in order to keep track of changes and growth in the researcher and the study (Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E., 1985).

## **ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS**

It is crucial for the researcher to establish trustworthiness in order to conduct a credible, sound study. Valid inquiry must “demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 29). In this study, the researcher established trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### *Credibility*

Credibility, as described by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) is “related to the degree of confidence in the ‘truth’ that the findings of a particular inquiry have for the subjects with which – and the context within which – the inquiry was carried out” (p. 29). There are seven methods to establish credibility in a naturalistic study, these methods include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling. In this study the researcher used referential adequacy, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling to establish credibility.

Referential adequacy lends to credibility because all materials used for the study need to be collected to give a holistic view of the content (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 31). The researcher asked permission to tape record each interview. After the interview, the researcher transcribed the interviews and returned to subjects for member checking.

Member checking lends to credibility because it allows subjects the opportunity to review what was transcribed from the interview, make necessary changes, and approve their thoughts and comments. After the researcher transcribed the interview, she emailed the subjects their interview and asked for corrections and approvals regarding their interview (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 147).

Peer debriefing lends to credibility by allowing a professional outside of the context to review the findings of the researcher (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 31). It is best to conduct the debriefing throughout the entire study to review “perceptions, insights, and analyses with professionals outside the context who have enough general

understanding of the nature of the study to debrief the researcher and provide feedback” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 31). Feedback might include necessary changes in order to refine or redirect the study. Faculty members served as peer debriefers for this study.

Finally, the researcher used reflexive journaling to establish credibility in this study. Journal entries by the researcher should include reasons behind crucial decisions, logistics, scheduling, and insights into the study. This journal is part of the audit trail as it documents everything that took place throughout the study (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 143).

### *Transferability*

Transferability establishes the applicability of a study (Lincoln et al., 1985). In order to determine transferability a researcher can use thick description, purposive sampling, and reflexive journaling. In this study, the researcher used all three methods.

Thick description is the process where the researcher collects detailed descriptions of data, subjects’ thoughts and ideas, and reports them in detail and with precision to allow judgment of transferability. Through this study the researchers transcribed the thoughts and feelings of the subjects during the interview as well as recorded the interview in order to present accurate responses.

Purposive sampling was used in this study to determine the subjects being interviewed and the number of alumni. The researcher ‘purposively seeks both the typical and the divergent data’ that the insights of the alumni might suggest (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 33). Through purposive sampling, the researcher can fill in gaps of information and narrow the focus on recurring themes (Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E., 1985).

*Dependability*

In order for a naturalistic inquiry to be dependable it must be consistent. The study must provide evidence (i.e. audit trail) in order for the audience to replicate the study if necessary. If replicated, the audience's findings should be consistent with the findings of the original research (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 33). The researcher in this study used an audit trail and reflexive journaling to keep adequate records throughout the study and to determine dependability.

*Confirmability*

Confirmability is the process of checking to make sure the findings in the study are true to the alumni's thoughts and not the biases of the researcher. To establish confirmability, the researcher used reflexive journaling, peer debriefing, and confirmability audit (Erlandson et al., 1993, pps. 35, 143).

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

What is the difference between the Keystone Club and the Boys & Girls Club program? The Keystone Club is a separate program of the Boys & Girls Club. All Keystone Club members are Boys & Girls Club members as well, but have opted to join the service and leadership oriented program to better equip them for the future. The Keystone Club is an option for all Boys & Girls Club members, it is not mandatory. With that in mind, the Boys & Girls Club is available to anyone. As a member of the Club youth can participate in all programs offered. However, it is not mandatory for them to participate in any certain activity. The participants in this study differ as seven participants who were strictly Boys & Girls Club alumni, with no participation in the Keystone Club. Likewise, there are seven participants in this study who were both alumni of the Boys & Girls Club and the Keystone Club.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate and compare the experiences of selected Boys & Girls Club alumni with those alumni who also participated in the Keystone Club program to determine the influence each program had on their career and life experiences. Specifically, the study examined the development of the alumni's leadership skills, character, and participation in community affairs.

The Keystone Club program offers six core areas in which members can participate. The six areas include service to club and community, character and leadership development, education and career exploration, free enterprise, unity, and social recreation.



The Boys & Girls Club offer five diversified core program areas: 1) character and leadership development; 2) education and career exploration; 3) health and life skills; 4) the arts; and 5) sports, fitness, and recreation. For the purpose of this study, I looked at the four core areas of the Keystone Club: 1) character and leadership development; 2) education and career exploration; 3) life skills; and 4) sports, fitness, and recreation. In addition, the study separated service to club and community from the character and leadership development to let it stand alone. These four areas are common to both the Keystone Club and to the Boys & Girls Club. In order to determine the impact of both programs and whether there are differences between the programs I needed to study the similarities between the two programs.

The following report discusses the impact the Keystone Club and the Boys & Girls Club has had on both sets of alumni. Quotes and excerpts from each of the interviews illustrate the concepts further. Alumni were coded male participants as (M) and female participants as (F). In addition, interviews were coded to identify those alumni who participated in the Keystone Club program: Yes Keystone (YK) or No Keystone (NK). The objectives to the study, again, are:

1. Determine current demographics of alumni of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley and Keystone Club programs.
2. Determine the benefits gained through the six core areas of the Keystone Club program:
  - a. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's service to club and community;

- b. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's character and leadership development;
  - c. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's education and career exploration;
  - d. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's unity;
  - e. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's free enterprise;
  - f. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's social recreation.
3. Determine the benefits gained through the five core areas of the Boys & Girls Club:
- a. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's service to club and community;
  - b. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's character and leadership development;
  - c. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's education and career path;
  - d. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's life skills;
  - e. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's social recreation;
4. Compare and contrast the impact of Boys & Girls Club programs on Boys & Girls Club alumni and Keystone Club alumni.

## **OBJECTIVE ONE**

*Determine current demographics of alumni of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley and Keystone Club programs*

The sample of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley alumni consisted of seven Keystone Club members (YK: four females, three males) and seven Boys & Girls Club members (NK: one female, six males). Those members in the Boys & Girls Club did not participate in any Keystone Club activities; however, those in the Keystone Club did participate in additional programs offered by the Boys & Girls Club. Participants in the study ranged from 21 years of age to 47 years of age. With the Club being in existence for 48 years in Bryan, Texas, I was able to find several alumni that started within the first year of the Club's opening. Of the participants, seven were between the ages of 21 and 30 (six YK, one NK); five between the ages of 31 and 40 (one YK, four NK); and two between the ages of 41 and 50 (zero YK, two NK).

Income levels varied greatly between the fourteen participants. One participant's income was in the less than \$10,000 range (FYK2); zero in the \$10,000 to \$14,999; two in the \$15,000 to \$24,999 range (MYK9, MYK14); five in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 range (FYK3, MYK4, MNK7, FYK8, FYK12); two in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 range (MNK1, MNK11); one in the \$75,000 to \$99,999 range (MNK5), two in the \$100,000 to \$149,999 range (MNK6, FNK13); one in the \$150,000 to \$200,000 range (MNK10); and zero in the more than \$200,000 range. All fourteen participants have had some college or more. Three participants' highest level of education completed included some college courses (FYK2, MNK7, MNK11); six participants had a bachelor's degree (MNK1,

FYK3, MNK6, FYK8, MYK9, MYK14); four participants had a master's degree (MYK4, MNK5, FYK12, FNK13); and one participant had a professional degree (MNK10). Jobs varied from attorney to teacher, coach to salesman, and nonprofit director to program managers.

Alumni, both Keystone Club and Boys & Girls Club, joined the club for similar reasons. Reasons included activity on college résumé (MYK14), new opportunities for participation (MYK9), staff and/or friends persuaded them to join (MYK4, FYK3, FYK2, FNK13, FYK8), activities and sports (MNK10, MNK1, MNK5, MNK6), or parents signed them up (MNK7, MNK11, FYK12). “My mom wanted me to find something to get involved in to help me get out of my shell; I was really shy” (FYK12).

## **OBJECTIVE TWO**

*Determine the benefits gained through the six core areas of the Keystone Club program*

The six core areas that the Keystone Club program focuses on is service to club and community, character and leadership development, education and career exploration, unity, free enterprise, and social recreation. Through this study, the participants answered questions referring to their activities as a member of the Keystone Club and then related activities they participate in now. I also looked at how the activities of the participants' past influenced their lives in the present.

*Objective Two (A)*

*Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's service to club and community*

The first core area examined was the participants' service to their club and community. The questions targeted to this theme asked about participants' service during their membership years and also their current service as adults. Through activities such as tutoring, coaching basketball, picking up trash and garbage around the Boys & Girls Club and neighborhood, organizing a carnival for kids, and painting elderly houses, the Keystone Club members had the opportunity to participate in various service projects.

All seven Keystone Club members participated in several service projects through the program. "Passion to serve and give of your time" (MYK9) was one lesson learned through this core area. Five of the seven Keystone Club members said that it gave them the passion to serve in their community and to continue as an adult (MYK9, FYK3, FYK2, MYK14, FYK12).

I realized how much other people have given to me while I was growing. These people do not even know our names and they still gave to me. That meant a lot to me while growing up to have someone give to me without knowing who I was. This carried on to me as an adult and giving back to the community and especially other youth (MYK9).

Today, the Keystone Club alumni continue to serve in their community through volunteering on nonprofit boards (FYK12), church (FYK8), and Boys & Girls Club

programs (FYK2, MYK4, MYK9, MYK14, FYK8, FYK3). “I helped with my Club’s needs assessment for a new building and with their capital campaign” (MYK4). The majority (six of seven) of the Keystone Club alumni said that they still actively serve the Boys & Girls Club through volunteer activities as well as through part-time and full-time jobs. Four of the seven alumni have jobs at their local Boys & Girls Club; whether as Program Coordinator, Recreational Assistant or Keystone Club Advisor, the alumni continue to be involved in the Boys & Girls Club. “My participation in the Keystone Club is the reason I am at the job I currently have now” (FYK8).

### *Objective Two (B)*

#### *Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni’s character and leadership development*

The Keystone Club helped alumni develop character and leadership skills through the program and its activities. Leadership and character traits such as patience, integrity, confidence, respect and honesty, and others were mentioned several times as traits the alumni learned through the Keystone Club. The following are statements from the Keystone Club regarding the impact the Club had on their character and leadership skills, and specifically certain traits developed.

#### **Patience** (MYK9, FYK2, FYK3)

- “Learned to be patient and to be temperamental [temperate]” (MYK9).
- “Gave me the experience to endure, to know where the students are coming from and to be patient with them” (FYK3).

### **Integrity (MYK9)**

- “Integrity. A lot of people are watching you when you are leading hundreds of people. As a leader you can not do just whatever you would like to when people are looking to you to be a leader” (MYK9).

### **Confidence (FYK3, FYK2)**

- “After that experience I was very confident in myself” (FYK2).
- “Confidence to build relationships with younger kids and to be a role model. [It] has built my confidence up so that I was not as nervous when I taught the first time” (FYK3).

### **Respect and Honesty (MYK4, MYK14)**

- “Being honest and being respectful to other club members and the community” (MYK4).
- “The main one [trait] would probably be honesty and loyalty as well. And definitely commitment, you have to be committed to the Club” (MYK14).

### **Altruism and Passion (FYK3, MYK9, FYK12)**

- “Passion to help my community and to give back” (FYK3).
- “This carried on to me as an adult and giving back to the community and especially other youth” (MYK9).

### **Encouragement, Motivation, and Persistence (MYK4, FYK8, MYK9, FYK12, MYK14)**

- “Learned to support people” (FYK8)

- “Encouraged me to be more motivated to do more” (MYK4)
- “Dedication. You have to be dedicated to something. Keystone took a lot of time but we had to be dedicated to the Club to reach our final goals” (FYK8).
- “Motivation. Learned to motivate each other because a lot of times we didn’t want to do some of the projects and work so we learned to call each other and to motivate each other” (FYK8).
- “Ambition and empathy” (FYK12).

Alumni, through the Keystone Club, learned to be respectful, honest, to encourage and motivate each other, and learned the importance of giving back to their community. All of the traits mentioned provide members with the ability to build their character and leadership skills but it also helped to produce members who learned to be leaders, to have a voice, and to be responsible.

Five of the seven alumni discussed specific activities that helped them become leaders in the club and community (FYK2, FYK3, MYK4, MYK9, MYK14). Activities included leadership retreats and conferences, leading service projects and fundraisers, and participating in the Youth of the Year program and National Steering Committees. The Youth of the Year program is designed to recognize youth who serve their community, excel academically, and who make contributions to family and spiritual life. Clubs nominate their own Youth of the Year candidates who then compete, regionally and nationally, for the National Youth of the Year honor.



Youth from various clubs throughout the nation are selected by the National Boys & Girls Clubs of America staff to serve on National Steering Committees to design and implement national conferences, such as the National Keystone Conference. Usually between eight and twelve students are nominated nationally for this honor.

- “The main one [activity] would probably be the National Steering Committee because outside my own Keystone Club I was being asked to design and implement a whole program for the National Keystone Club Conference” (MYK14).
- “When I was 17, I was selected to run the regional Keystone Conference for 2,000 people” (MYK9).
- “The Keystone Club is the number one impact in my leadership” (MYK14).

Six of the seven alumni held leadership positions within the Keystone Club (FYK2, FYK3, FYK8, MYK9, FYK12, MYK14). Positions ranged from Treasurer, Secretary, Vice-President, and President of the local Keystone Clubs to co-chairs for the National Keystone Conferences.

All seven alumni discussed the impact the Keystone Club had on their ability to lead groups.

- “In the Keystone Club as an older member we were told to be a leader or mentor to the youth by leading by example” (MYK14).
- “Keystone Club helped me learn to take the lead with issues and with volunteering in my community” (FYK2).

- “Advisors were huge impacts in my life. Had a different advisor every year which taught me different ways to be a mentor and different ways to lead groups” (FYK12).
- “A big part of my leadership development. [It] set the stage to be leaders inside the Club and in the community” (MYK4).

Being a leader taught three of the seven that they had a voice even as a teen in the community and that they needed to use it (FYK2, FYK8, MYK9).

- “It [Keystone Club] played a lot in my leadership because it allowed me to have a voice” (FYK8).
- “Taught us that we had a voice as much as any adult did” (FYK12).

### *Objective Two (C)*

#### *Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni’s education and career exploration*

The Keystone Club targets education and career exploration as a main goal for each member. Through the interview process, the participants were asked to identify activities in which they participated that influenced their educational and/or career aspirations. Five of the alumni recalled participating in activities that targeted their education and career. Activities included the annual Keystone Conference which “talked about different careers and educational paths” (MYK4), attended the “how to prepare for college seminar hosted by the school district” (FYK2), and the Boys & Girls Club Job Ready Program (FYK8, FYK12). Through the Job Ready program, the alumni

“learned how to interview, write résumés...and our interview skills were critiqued by company managers” (FYK8).

The Keystone Club impacted the careers of six of the seven alumni (FYK2, FYK3, MYK4, FYK8, FYK12, MYK14).

- “I really attribute that I stayed in the nonprofit work because of the Boys & Girls Club; [Keystone Club] had a very central role in my career” (FYK12).
- “I chose to work with kids and the community because of my earlier experience in the Boys & Girls Club” (MYK4).
- “I probably would have been a teacher anyways without the Keystone’s impact but I don’t think I would have lasted without the experience” (FYK3).
- “The way it played a role is that I am still helping people, which is what I always wanted to do. I never looked at myself being a fitness career person as more of me helping people” (MYK14).

The alumni said that the Keystone Club and Boys & Girls Club experience not only impacted some of their careers but also provided opportunities to explore higher education. “[I] visited three schools in Atlanta [Keystone Conference] and students at Texas A&M talked to us about going to school, continuing our education, and the college life” (FYK2).

The Keystone Club provided two alumni with scholarships to Texas A&M University which helped them with their finances. “Being involved in the Keystone Club helped me receive two scholarships through the Boys & Girls Club. By receiving

the scholarships I was able to go straight into Texas A&M University instead of going to a Junior College” (MYK9).

The Club provided role models in staff and volunteers to the alumni especially as they were facing life after graduation. Two alumni mentioned that they still keep in contact with their advisor and/or role model at the club today (MYK9, FYK12).

- “I talked to M. about getting a Kinesiology degree from Texas A&M University because he received the same degree that I did” (MYK14).
- “A. introduced me to a lot of young men at Texas A&M. She felt that I was college-bound and would end up going to Texas A&M, so she led me to meet other men at the school” (MYK9).
- “Conversations with staff and advisors led me to my career at the Club” (FYK8).
- “A. and M. taught us that we had a voice as much as any adult did. Helped us to have the courage to get out of our comfort zone to lead a group presentation that we never have done before” (FYK12).
- “R. the way he leads by example and showing me how to do everything. He sees the good in everybody and when you don’t think you can do it, he’s the one that believes in you” (MYK14).

The advisors of the Keystone Club played a huge role in the lives of the alumni because of the consistency in their lives (FYK2, FYK3, MYK4, MYK9, FYK12).

- “She was everywhere with the Keystone Club members. She visited the high school often to see the members and to be with us” (MYK9).

- “Advisors were huge impacts in my life. I had a different advisor every year which taught me different ways to be a mentor and different ways to lead groups” (FYK12).
- “He was involved in a lot of the Keystone Club as well as our school involvement. He always checked our grades and supported other extracurricular activities” (FYK2).

Along with having role models to look up to, the alumni learned how to respect adults through the Keystone Club and Boys & Girls Club (FYK2, MYK4, MYK9, MYK14). “[I] learned how to treat a lady from her, to be respectful and open doors” (MYK9). “Through that experience [working with others] we learned to be respectful to other clubs and communities” (MYK4).

Through new experiences and opportunities, Keystone Club alumni reported learning valuable life skills such as organizational and communication skills during their years at the club. All seven Keystone Club alumni reported having the opportunity to travel outside of the state of Texas. “[I] didn’t travel a whole lot with my family so the Keystone Club provided me opportunities to travel outside of Texas” (FYK8). Keystone Club members traveled to regional and national Keystone Conferences in Georgia, New Mexico, Colorado, Indianapolis, and Missouri. The “motivational speakers [at the conference] really impacted me a lot and continued to motivate me to be a stronger leader” (FYK3).

Four alumni were impacted by the once-in-a-lifetime opportunities they experienced through the Keystone Club. Experiences ranged from serving on the

National Keystone Steering Committee (FYK12), meeting Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones and Governor Rick Perry of Texas (MYK9), and speaking at city council meetings (MYK9), to being selected to attend the U.S. Olympic Committee Flame Program and staying at the Olympic training center for 10-days (MYK14). “Being involved in the Boys & Girls Club, but mainly the Keystone Club, opened a lot of doors that I don’t think would have been opened” (MYK14).

*Objective Two (D)*

*Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on former alumni’s unity*

Unity, for the majority of the Keystone Club members, was hard to define as it was not really stressed as a core area for many of the Club members. However, the alumni participated in programs that united people (community, Keystone Club members, and Club members) but was not necessarily their main objective to the activities. All seven alumni of the Keystone Club said that they participated in activities that helped unite the Club and community but three of the seven alumni said they “never really identified any areas that needed improved unity” (FYK3, MYK9, FYK8). “Unity is a big part of today’s Keystone Club program but may not have been while I was in the program” (FYK8).

The Keystone Club alumni that did target Unity areas implemented programs such as food tasting, seminars, and National Kids Day to unite kids and families. “All activities brought the community in and learned to socialize and work with various groups of people in the community” (FYK3). Students from Texas A&M University

helped one Keystone Club provide a food tasting of different cultures. “Keystone Club members would go around and taste the foods and learn about their different cultures” (FYK2). The members learned about why certain cultures eat certain foods and helped the members to open their eyes to different cultures. Areas identified by club members as needing improved unity were “high school and the community” (MYK14).

### *Objective Two (E)*

#### *Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni’s free enterprise*

The Keystone Club focuses on free enterprise as one of their main goals. Through the club activities of garage sales, car washes, concession stands, bake sales, and parents’ night out the alumni learned skills to help them with their future involvement in community, school, and careers. Alumni had the opportunity to participate in career and job training sessions at Keystone Conferences and through the Job Search Program at the club (FYK12).

The first set of business skills the alumni reported learning through the Keystone Club was management of both groups and finances.

- “This was my first time to really manage a group, definitely helps me with my career today. Helps with my management of the gym, activities, and finding new ways to run a gym. I had to learn management and scheduling work hours” (MYK14).
- “I have taken away my project management skills, and the ability to lead teams from my involvement. Helped me learn about nonprofit management, leading

meetings each week, preparing agendas, and monitoring progress on projects” (FYK12).

- “[I] learned how to make money and not just break even on the fundraisers” (FYK8).
- “[We] learned how to develop a budget and how to raise the money to reach our goal” (MYK4).
- “I learned how important money is and to not throw it away. I learned that money was hard to come by and thought twice before spending it” (FYK2).

The next set of business skills the alumni learned through the Keystone Club were the planning and implementation of projects (FYK2, FYK8, FYK12, MYK14), marketing (MYK9), setting goals (MYK9, MYK14, FYK3, FYK8), and time management (MYK4, FYK3).

- “Learned how to work with the media and newspaper when I was in the Keystone Club and this has helped me today” (MYK9).
- “We planned the entire event with approval from the advisor” (FYK2).
- “The main reason we turned a profit for the garage sale and Parents Night Out is because we went out and asked people to donate items to the garage sale and provide food for the lock-in. We contacted the businesses and asked for their sponsorships” (MYK14).
- “That I can do what I want to in life. I might have to save all my money to go on a vacation, but I can do whatever I put my mind to doing” (FYK8).
- “[A] motivational speaker said to dream big and to keep those dreams” (FYK3).



The Keystone Club enabled teens with the opportunity to learn valuable life skills that they would remember the rest of their lives. Life skills including team work, organizational skills, and socialization helped the alumni with achieving their aspirations and their careers.

**Teamwork** (FYK2, FYK3, MYK4, MYK9, FYK12, MYK14): Through trips and activities provided through the Keystone Club, alumni were able to make connections with each other, learn to value each other and to work together.

- “Teamwork. Young staff did not always want to participate and do their work. I took on the role of motivating the staff. Ability to recognize the need to motivate the staff” (FYK2).
- “Learn to value other advisors and other members’ input. Learn to work with them [members], accept them, and to make each other stronger” (FYK3).
- “We became a closer-knit group. When you travel with people you get to know them better because you have more time to get to know them as a person” (MYK14).

**Organizational Skills** (FYK2, MYK4, FYK8, MYK9, FYK12): Through fundraisers and community projects the Keystone Club members learned organizational skills that they were able to utilize in their future careers.

- “Project management” (FYK8)
- “Taught me to be an organized person” (MYK4)

- “Learned to organize big events and that when push comes to shove I can do it” (MYK9).

**Socialization and Communication Skills:** All seven alumni stated that the Keystone Club taught them how to network and interact with others. Through their field trip and weekly activities the alumni learned to “be friendly to everyone” (FYK2), “network and get to know each other” (MYK9), and “be comfortable around speakers and other leaders” (FYK3). Participating in the “steering committees across the region helped me with the ability to meet others and to respect each other” (FYK8).

For three of the alumni, the Keystone Club had a huge impact on helping them break out of their “shy shell” in high school (FYK2, FYK8, FYK12). “Before joining Keystone I was terribly shy and Keystone forced me to challenge myself and to get out of my shell” (FYK8). Five of the seven alumni mentioned that the Keystone Club provided them the opportunities to speak in public and to improve their speaking skills (FYK2, FYK3, FYK8, FYK12, MYK14).

- “I was real nervous to talk to a big group of adults, but once I did I realized I really liked it. From then on I was asked to talk in front of the camera and in front of other groups” (FYK2).
- “Helped me have the courage to get out of my comfort zone, to lead a group or presentation that I never did before” (FYK12).
- “Being on the regional steering committee I had the opportunity to speak in front of large groups. Helped me with public speaking and planning big conferences” (FYK8).

*Objective Two (F)*

*Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's social recreation*

Keystone Club members participated in social recreation activities in addition to their other core areas. The Keystone Club alumni remembered going camping, fishing, and attending Texas A&M baseball games. They also played games at the club with the younger members, held dances at the club, and met at different houses and restaurants to spend time together.

Recreational activities helped members get to know each other and to learn how to socialize and communicate as club members earlier and professional lives later.

- “Able to be friendly towards everyone” (FYK2).
- “Helped me learn how to get to know each other and to respect each other” (FYK8).
- “Gave us an outlet to interact with other kids, not always seeing the business side of the Club” (FYK12).
- “[The recreational activities] definitely improved the interaction between groups and gave us things to talk about with each other” (FYK3).
- “It [recreational activities] helped break up cliques among Keystone Club members because we were all different, hung out with different people at the high school” (FYK8).

All seven Keystone Club alumni continued with their extracurricular activities in high school. Six alumni participated in athletic teams including wrestling, baseball, basketball, football, track, and cross country (MYK14, FYK2, FYK3, MYK3, FYK8,

MYK9). All seven alumni participated in organizations outside of athletics including Keystone Club, Unity (diversity organization), Choir, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Rotor Club, Orchestra, Science Club, Health Occupation Students of America, and church youth groups.

### **OBJECTIVE THREE**

*Determine the benefits gained through the core areas of the Boys & Girls Club*

The core areas that the Boys & Girls Club program focuses on in relation to the Keystone Club are service to club and community, character and leadership development, education and career exploration, life skills, and social recreation. Through this study, the participants answered questions referring to their activities as a member of the Boys & Girls Club and then related activities they participate in now. Each core area also looked at how the activities of the past influenced their lives in the present.

#### *Objective Three (A)*

*Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's service to club and community*

The Boys & Girls Club alumni also had opportunities to serve their club and their community during their membership. Four of the seven Boys & Girls Club alumni said that they participated in service projects at the club such as cleaning parks, picking up garbage, coaching basketball games, and being a team leader for a club program (MNK6, MNK7, MNK11, FNK13). Three alumni did not remember participating in any

service activities at the club (MNK1, MNK5, MNK10). However, five of the seven alumni continue to serve in their community through United Way and civic organizations (MNK7, MNK5, MNK11), coaching (MNK6), church (MNK10) and Boys & Girls Club (MNK6, MNK5, MNK1). One alumnus continues to serve the Club through his leadership as Executive Director of a Club (MNK7), another as a Unit Director (FYK8), and others continue to participate in Club activities by enrolling siblings or children in the Club (FNK13, MNK11).

Through the Boys & Girls Club experience one participant said “I saw adults and volunteers helping me at the Club and I always wanted to serve in the same way with other kids” (MNK6).

### *Objective Three (B)*

#### *Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni’s character and leadership development*

The Boys & Girls Club helped alumni develop character and leadership skills through its regular programs and activities. Leadership and character traits such as sportsmanship, competitiveness, hope, caring, dependability, honesty, and others were mentioned several times as traits the alumni learned through their experience in the Boys & Girls Club.

**Sportsmanship, Competitiveness, and Fairness** (MNK5, MNK7, MNK10, FNK13)

- “Taught me to calm down and to be nice. To have the right attitude for every situation. Learned how to have a good attitude even when I did not want to” (FNK13).
- “Taught me fairness and fair play” (MNK7).
- “First time to realize that hard work gets good results” (MNK10).

**Honesty and Trust** (MNK1, MNK6, MNK11, FNK13)

- “Learned to be honest, loyal, and trustworthy” (MNK6).
- “Taught me to be honest” (MNK11)
- “Trusting team mates and coaches on what they were doing” (MNK1).

**Dependability** (MNK10, FNK13)

- “Learned to be a person people could always count on. To be dependable” (MNK10).
- “To follow through” (FNK13).

**Hope, Confidence, and Caring** (MNK1, MNK5, MNK6, MNK7, MNK10, MNK11, FNK13)

- “Taught me to be a caring person. To realize that there are people that do not have the same things that I do and that I need to care for them as well” (MNK6).

- “Confidence building at the club. Ability to get involved in club programs and team athletics helped build confidence in members” (MNK10).
- “Gained self-confidence, received affirmation from people I looked up to” (MNK10).
- “The club gave me a place to escape that life, get involved in sports, attend camps, and therefore gave me hope for my future” (MNK11).

The Boys & Girls Club not only helped develop alumni’s character traits but also their ability to work with others and those from different cultures. Five of the seven alumni felt the club gave them the opportunities to meet new people and interact with kids of all ages and backgrounds (MNK5, MNK6, MNK7, MNK11, FNK13).

- “Being at the club almost forces you to interact with new people” (MNK6).
- “Really taught me how to work with people on all levels” (FNK13).
- “Learned to conform and adapt to different people” (MNK11).

Specifically, the Boys & Girls Club members developed leadership skills through mentoring and tutoring kids, teaching art classes, and participating in sports and tournaments (MNK5, MNK11, FNK13, MNK7). “Staff found places to naturally put me in to be a leader” (MNK7). Through the activities the Boys & Girls Club alumni learned about being a leader and what it takes to be a good leader.

- “[I] learned to read people and make decisions based on the situations or present the decision in a way that is fitting for the situations” (FNK13).

- “[The club played] a big role [in my leadership] without me realizing it” (MNK7).
- “Teaches you how to follow. Following is a big part of learning to be a leader” (MNK1).
- “As a salesman, I know now how to lead my team of salesman” (MNK6).

Not only did the Boys & Girls Club alumni learn about leadership but also the responsibilities of being a leader and the job that goes along with the task (MNK6, MNK1, FNK13).

- “As a leader I am able to handle responsibilities through my experience with the club” (MNK6).
- “Knowing your job, what it is and your responsibility to the team” (MNK1).

All seven Boys & Girls Club alumni had the opportunity during their membership years to be a leader in the organization. Leadership roles included Junior Staff positions, Youth of the Year, captain on a basketball or football team, All-Stars, and being a student worker at the club.

### *Objective Three (C)*

*Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni’s education and career path*

The Boys & Girls Club impacted the education and career path of five of the seven alumni. Two alumni said that the club had no impact on their career whatsoever



(MNK10, MNK6). The other five alumni said their involvement in the club helped them find their career.

- “At the Club when they opened the computer lab, I worked a lot in the lab which helped me realize that I wanted to work as a computer programmer. I’ve been a computer programmer for seven years” (FNK13).
- “My basketball coach really influenced me to be more like my dad and work at a Club” (MNK7).
- “Lead to my career – sports and access to sports” (MNK1).
- “Funneled [me] towards athletics and working with youth” (MNK5).
- “Always knew growing up that I would be an upstanding citizen and I owe that to the Boys & Girls Club. Lived two blocks from the club so I was always at the club” (MNK11).
- “When you have people believe in you, you do not want to let them down, so that pushes you. This has helped me become a more service-oriented person as I provide service to those at my job” (FNK13).

Regarding education, two Boys & Girls Club alumni said that the club helped with their educational paths (MNK11, FNK13). “College trips to Texas A&M (campus and college life) gave me inspiration to continue my education and get the chance to play college football (a life long dream). The club helped me excel and gain skills in football, which helped me to go to Junior College” (MNK11). The club helped alumni discover college and life after high school through higher education. Through field trips to local campuses and helping teens fill out college applications and taking college entrance

exams, the club gave alumni dreams to continue on. “The people in there showed me that I wanted an education to get a career not just a job. I always wanted to go to college but the club helped me get there and to go through the different stages (SAT/ACT, applying to colleges, etc.)” (FNK13).

The Boys & Girls Club helped alumni with their career and educational aspirations as well as enabling them with the opportunity to build positive relationships with role models in the club. All seven participants said that they had role models to look up to at the club.

- “They were all positive role models in my life. Very influential on the person I have become today. L. was like a father figure to me and would tell you how it is” (MNK11).
- “[My] water ski teacher coached me and talked to me about who I was going to become” (MNK5).
- “M. showed me that I can achieve anything if you work for it. R. was my dad away from home. He would do anything for me. Help me with getting into school and getting a job. To this day I still can call on him anytime” (FNK13).
- “G., I talked one on one with him about personal issues” (MNK7).

Besides having role models in the club, the club staff and volunteers helped the alumni learn to respect adults (MNK1, MNK5, MNK6, MNK11). “Club kids always knew the staff was in charge and we respected them” (MNK6). “[I] respected my coaches and those that specifically talked to me about variety of problems I was facing” (MNK5). Staff and volunteers provided guidance, leadership, and activities whom

members could rely on and trust. “The staff treated the kids well and were always very helpful” (MNK6). “[I] learned to work with an authority figure” (MNK1) through the Club.

### *Objective Three (D)*

#### *Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni’s life skills*

The club however did influence the work ethic of five alumni by giving alumni skills to take with them to their careers. Skills included professionalism, punctuality, organizational skills, and learning to set goals.

- “Professionalism; true commitment to job and school; and work ethic” (FNK13).
- “Learning how to be there all the time” (MNK7).
- “Having to be some place at a certain time and [I] learned management skills from being in the club” (MNK10).
- “Learn to work for a common goal, to make goals” (MNK1).
- “First time as a kid to really develop and work towards goals” (MNK5).
- “Organizational skills: scheduling practices and games, making sure everyone has the right shirts/uniforms” (MNK7).

Work ethics were not the only skills given to alumni of the Boys & Girls Club. Boys & Girls Club alumni also learned socialization and communication skills that they continue to use every day. Five alumni said that they learned how to interact and communicate with each other. “[I] learned to communicate well with people and to be

able to persuade them to do things in the right fashion” (MNK6). “Ability to communicate to people both young and old” (MNK7).

Activities provided at the club helped two alumni break out of their “shy shells” (MNK7, FNK13). “Coaching made me become more vocal and a verbal leader; helped me get out of my shell and become more of an extrovert” (MNK7). “I learned how to entertain audiences and know when to be outgoing” (FNK13). Public speaking engagements varied from commercials, leading a Smart Moves group, to speaking in front of small and large crowds. All activities helped build confidence in their public speaking abilities.

The programs and activities provided by the club allowed members to develop life skills that they could carry with them throughout their lives. Through new experiences and opportunities such as learning how to ski and swim (MNK11, MNK5), college trips to Texas A&M and athletic events (MNK10, MNK11, MNK7), camping and fishing (MNK11, FNK13), and outdoor recreation (MNK1) the club members developed new life skills. “The Boys & Girls Club gave me many opportunities and activities to participate in that I would not have experienced. It gave opportunities to those from low-income families” (MNK11). “First time I was ever involved in an organized team of kids doing something for a common goal. Continued to be involved in team sports throughout high school” (MNK10).

The Boys & Girl Club provided a lot of new experiences in the Bryan/College Station but it also provided alumni with the opportunity to travel with their memberships. All seven alumni mentioned traveling experiences in their interviews.

Travels to Six Flags and Rangers game (MNK7), Kids Across America Camp in Missouri (MNK7, MNK11), conferences and tournaments in Austin (FNK13), Wichita Falls (MNK7), Dallas (MNK1), and New Mexico (MNK6). For one alumnus, the trip to New Mexico was his first time out of state (MNK6).

*Objective Three (E)*

*Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's social recreation*

Boys & Girls Club members had the opportunity to participate in various recreational activities through their membership. Participants in the study actively took part in activities such as water skiing, dodge ball, board games, hand ball, attending day camps, and reading books. Five alumni participated in two or more organized sports at the club including football, basketball, and/or wrestling (MNK1, MNK5, MNK6, MNK10, MNK11).

The Boys & Girls Club offers a variety of activities for all members to participate in. For two of the study's participants the main draw to the club was for the athletic programs.

- “Purely an athletic experience at the Club for me” (MNK1).
- “[I] mainly participated in athletics. Played every sport that was sponsored and went to the club after school” (MNK10).

For those participating in mainly sports at the club, they learned a great deal through their experience on the basketball court or football fields.

- “Sports taught me to be outgoing and competitive [in schooling and current career]” (FNK13).
- “Getting involved in athletics allowed me to have role models, someone to look up to” (MNK10).
- “[The Boys & Girls Club was the] first outlet to real team sports. First organized football program that they had to learn skills specific to a sport” (MNK1).

All seven Boys & Girls Club alumni mentioned that the social recreation activities helped them with team work and making new friends.

**Teamwork and Friendships** (MNK1, MNK5, MNK6, MNK7, MNK10, MNK11, FNK13)

- “I had friends to play basketball with, different people to play foosball with or ping pong. I was able to get along with everyone” (MNK7).
- “Taught me how to become friends with other club members and to not be afraid to meet people and get to know them” (MNK6).
- “Taught me camaraderie because we had to work together” (MNK11).
- “[Taught me] how to be a team player and how to get along with others” (MNK6).

The Boys & Girls Club is a great place for “forging on new friendships more than anything else” (MNK1). Three of the Boys & Girls Club alumni specifically mentioned forming lifelong friendships with club members.

- “Kids have the opportunity to develop friendships at the club that will last decades” (MNK1).
- “Me and my friends still talk about the days of ‘tackle football’, the good ole days” (MNK11).
- “Closest friends today are club members that I grew up with” (MNK7).

Alumni continued their social recreation into their high school activities. All seven Boys & Girls Club alumni participated in extracurricular activities during their high school years. All alumni participated in at least one sport (basketball, football, track, swimming, golf, baseball, and/or cross country). Three of the seven Boys & Girls Club alumni participated in extracurricular activities outside of athletics (FNK13, MNK10, MNK7). Activities included Keystone Club, National Honor Society, Yearbook Club, Mentoring, Student Council, Church, and community service clubs.

#### **OBJECTIVE FOUR**

*Compare and contrast the impact of Boys & Girls Club program on Boys & Girls Club alumni and Keystone Club alumni*

The Boys & Girls Club and Keystone Club programs both impacted the participants of this study. One impact in the lives of both Keystone Club alumni and Boys & Girls Club alumni is that they learned how to interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds. Every Keystone Club and Boys & Girls Club alumni mentioned several times the impact the club itself made on their ability to interact with people.

Keystone Club alumni said:

- “[I got to] meet different people of different socio-economic backgrounds; how to talk to them and learn to treat each other the same” (MYK9).
- “It’s helped me work with different people from all walks of life. I never judge anybody whether it may be a potential member or someone I work with” (MYK14).
- “Being respectful of all cultures and people’s backgrounds and to not be judgmental of others in the community” (MYK4).
- “Even though we all worked in the same club and Keystone Club, the members all had different backgrounds and different ideas. Learned to work with each other, respect others opinions and ideas” (FYK8).

Boys & Girls Club alumni said:

- “Integration happened in 1972, when I just arrived to Bryan. Because the Boys & Girls Club was the only place that was integrated, this helped me and other students involved in the Club to be comfortable with everyone as we integrated. We became the leaders of our schools because we were not shocked by the integration” (MNK5).
- “[I] learned to accept people for who they were” (FNK13).
- “The Club was predominantly black when I was growing up but playing tackle football allowed me to play against kids from other races. This



gave me the ability to interact with others. Learned to look at people as individuals not by color” (MNK11).

- “Helped with transition into integrated schools. I was not scared to walk into an integrated school because I already had the experience with other students of different cultures at the Boys & Girls Club” (MNK6).

During the interview process, each participant was asked to describe the general impact of the Boys & Girls Club and/or the Keystone Club programs had on their lives. The responses were overwhelming. All fourteen alumni reported a significant impact on their lives.

Keystone Club alumni:

- “Boys & Girls Club kept me out of prison. It kept me focused in school and on life; and has made me a productive citizen in the society” (MYK4).
- “Overall Keystone Club was a great benefit to me. The program keeps you from being idle all the time and keeps you focused on the right place. Helps you contribute to yourself and to others” (FYK2).
- “It’s the one club that gave me an impact in my life. Like we were going over everything from community to leadership to characteristics to social activities, it made me a better-rounded person” (MYK14).

Boys & Girls Club alumni:

- “I sit back and look at my life and wonder what my life would have been like without the Club. I believe that I would have been in jail, dead, or in

a life of crime like my friends did. I am glad that it gave me the many experiences that I did get through the Club. The Club helped me become the person I am today.” (MNK11).

- “Everything I am today I learned at the Club. I probably would not have been as successful as soon in my career as I have been [without the club]” (FNK13).
- “I was involved in the Boys & Girls Club when it made a significant impact on who I would become regarding character, personality, and confidence” (MNK10).
- “Made me a better person, more well-rounded” (MNK6).
- “I have a vivid memory of the activities I experienced at the Boys & Girls Club. After all these years I remember the activities, which to me that means they were very significant in my life” (MNK11).

With each powerful statement of the impact that the clubs brought to the participants came a recommendation to getting involved in the club. When asked if they would recommend that others get involved in the club they replied “absolutely” (FYK3, MNK6, MNK11), “of course” (MYK14, FNK13, MNK10), “definitely” (FYK12, MNK7), “in a heart beat” (MYK9), and “yes” (FYK2, FYK8, MYK4, MNK1). One participant summarized their comments “I would highly recommend the club, more so now than in the past” (MNK5).

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate and compare the experiences of selected Boys & Girls Club alumni with those alumni who also participated in the Keystone Club program to determine the influence each program had on their career and life experiences. Specifically, the study examined the alumni's leadership skills, character, and participation in community affairs. Data were collected through personal interviews of each alumnus in the study. The interview questions focused on the benefits gained in either the six core areas of the Keystone Club program or the five core areas in which Boys & Girls Club members participate.

To achieve the purpose of the study, the research posed four specific objectives to answer four research questions. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine current demographics of former alumni of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley and Keystone Club programs.
2. Determine the benefits gained through the six core areas of the Keystone Club program:
  - a. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's service to club and community;
  - b. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's character and leadership development;

- c. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's education and career exploration;
  - d. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's unity;
  - e. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's free enterprise;
  - f. Determine the influence of the Keystone Club program on alumni's social recreation.
3. Determine the benefits gained through the five core areas of the Boys & Girls Club:
- a. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's service to club and community;
  - b. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's character and leadership development;
  - c. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's education and career path;
  - d. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's life skills;
  - e. Determine the influence of the Boys & Girls Club on alumni's social recreation;
4. Compare and contrast the impact of Boys & Girls Club programs on Boys & Girls Club alumni and Keystone Club alumni.

Through the objectives, I was able to answer the four research questions:

1. Does the Keystone Club program impact the development of leadership skills and character in youth?
2. Does the Keystone Club program influence members in their career path and community investments?
3. Is the Keystone Club program a successful program?
4. Does the Boys & Girls Club impact alumni in the same way as the Keystone Club program?

## **SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Boys & Girls Club members who participate in the Keystone Club program receive specific training and guidance on character, leadership and communication skills, money management, team work, career exploration, and community involvement. Keystone Club members voluntarily join the program because of its ties to helping the community. The skills acquired through the Keystone Club can help youth gain valuable experiences for their future, shaping them into successful and productive citizens.

### *Boys & Girls Club Alumni Study*

In 2007, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America conducted a national survey of 1,014 alumni (2007a). Alumni participated in either an online survey or via telephone. In the survey, the alumni reported that the Boys & Girls Club had “both an immediate

and long-lasting impact on their lives” (2007a, para.4). Key findings in this study included:

- Up 5% from 1999, 57% of alumni said the Club saved their life
- Overall, 91% are satisfied with their adult life

More specifically, results from this study regarding attitudes toward civic engagement the “majority of the Club alumni believe it important to be a good citizen and are actively involved in their community” (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2007c, para. 3).

The study also researched the impact the club staff had on the character development of alumni. 85% of the alumni said they know right from wrong, 82% have self-confidence, 77% learned good leadership skills, 67% said they had goals and aspirations, and 67% said they had the ability to avoid difficulty with the law (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2007c).

### *Problems Youth Face*

In 2005, the national Keystone Club project was asked to develop a youth-led initiative and survey to distribute to other Keystone Club teens across America in hopes of finding out key issues teens in America face. This report titled, *Youth Report to America*, surveyed 46,000 teens ages 13 to 18 in the communities with local Keystone Clubs (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2005, p. 3). The survey gathered information regarding four key areas: teen outlook (how teens view their future), relationships, teen issues, and their view of America.

Forty percent of youth clearly identified drugs and alcohol as a significant problem facing their peers and neighborhoods (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2005, p. 6). Other problems facing the youth are violence (21%) and poverty (15%). Teens are aware of the problems facing America, especially those among their peers. It is crucial for teens that are especially at-risk in participating in such behaviors to have a place to get them off the streets and that can positively influence them and their future.

### *Service to Club and Community*

An underlying theme in the research for youth volunteers is the learning of altruistic behaviors at an early age. Altruism as stated in Wolfe's article, *What is altruism?*, "is defined as social behavior carried out to achieve positive outcomes for another rather than for the self" (1998, p. 321). Wolfe also mentioned that altruistic behaviors are "learned through others in the course of everyday life" (1998, p. 321). Youth learn altruistic behaviors at an early age through their volunteer work, their schools, and their peers who volunteer as well. Lenore and Franco's study, *Empowering Youths to Build Community through Service*, focused on youths' attitudes toward community service. Lenore and Franco mentioned that of the 278 youth surveyed in Orange County, California, 80% would have recruited their peers to participate (1999). That is a large majority of youth willing to recruit other youth to participate in altruistic acts; a step in learning altruistic behavior. Interestingly, Lenore also mentioned that of those who did not participate in service, 34% said they would if they did not have to do

it alone (1999). This means youth are often influenced by other youth to participate in service opportunities as well as becoming life-long givers.

### *Character and Leadership Development*

In 2003, Bruce studied 4-H state council members and the skills acquired through the 4-H program. In her study, Bruce interviewed 14 former state 4-H council members and one former council advisor. From this study, she found that the council members did learn leadership skills through their membership in 4-H and continued to gain knowledge of leadership during their council years (Bruce, 2003). Bruce also concluded that the council members did continue their participation and service with 4-H after their council years concluded.

In 2005, Radhakrishna reported in his study, *Influence of 4-H Programs on Former 4-H Members' Career and Life Experiences*, that alumni “felt that their 4-H experiences greatly contributed to developing group interaction skills, leadership skills, and decision making skills” (p. 82). The alumni study also indicated that 4-H participation influenced alumni’s completion of high school, career, higher education, community involvement, and leadership responsibilities. Alumni “strongly agreed that knowledge and skills gained in 4-H continued to benefit them in their adult lives” (Radhakrishna, 2005, p. 85).



### *Education and Career Exploration*

In 1998, colleagues from the University of Minnesota conducted a study titled *Volunteerism in Adolescence: A Process Perspective* (Johnson et al., 1998). In this study, they found that “those adolescents who become involved in volunteer activities have higher educational plans and aspirations, higher grade point averages, higher academic self-esteem, and a higher intrinsic motivation toward school work” (Johnson et al., 1998, p. 309). Not only do they tend to excel in their high school and higher education academia, but according to the study the youth who engage in altruistic acts at an early age form an altruistic identity and is “likely to be retained over time and increase the likelihood of engaging in pro-social behavior later in life” (Johnson et al., 1998, p. 311). The youth are learning a life-long skill, and a life-long passion for giving back and helping others. By learning this altruistic behavior at an early age, the youth continue to take part in their community.

### *Unity*

According to the 2000 United States Census, the United States is becoming more diverse regarding ethnicity (United States Census, 2000). Because of this, it is important for youth to learn how to embrace people of different cultures and backgrounds. Unity between youth is crucial for them to be educated and able to work together in the future, especially in the workplace.

In 2000, Billig researched the benefits gained by students who participated in service-learning. Throughout her study, Billig found that teens who participated in

service-learning were able to relate to culturally diverse groups (2000). The students' interaction with their peers and their leaders helped them to "increase their awareness of cultural differences and in their attitudes toward helping others" (Billig, 2000, p. 661). The students' experiences helped them also to become "more dependable and felt more comfortable communicating with ethically diverse groups" (Billig, 2000, p. 661).

### *Free Enterprise*

Teens today graduate from high school with limited knowledge of the real world and how to survive (Koehler et al., 1995). Upon graduation from high school teens are likely to make significant financial decisions regarding housing, utilities, furniture, food, and insurance, but are they ready to make these types of decisions (Koehler et al., 1995)? In 1991, the Consumer Federation of America and the American Express Company tested seniors in high school across the nation on financial matters. The teens correctly answered "42% of 52 questions about banking, auto insurance, housing, cars, credit, and food" (Danes et al., 1999, p. 28). The finding that more than 50% of students answered questions incorrectly regarding financial matters shows that teens need additional education regarding finances prior to graduation.

Danes, Huddleston-Casas, and Boyce, evaluated a new financial planning curriculum for teens in 1999. The program's main goal was to "increase the financial planning literacy of teens" (Danes et al., 1999, p. 29) by providing an introduction of financial planning and explaining the importance of saving and investing money. After Danes, Huddleston-Casas, and Boyce, conducted a pre/post test and a three month

follow-up test on the students' knowledge of financial matters, she concluded that the program had a 'positive impact on students' financial knowledge, behavior, and self-efficacy' (1999, p. 37). Although the study focused on personal finances, the basics of managing money can be applied to business finances as well.

### *Social Recreation*

Social recreation is more than a time to 'hang out' with friends and play games. Social recreation is a time for young people to get to know each other, break out of their comfort zones and to develop new or improve on their character skills. For many members of the Keystone Club, this social recreational period is the only time they are able to 'branch out' and discover new activities. With the increasing costs to participate in sports programs and the limited access to cultural museums, youth are turning to organizations to help them experience such opportunities (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Through participation in sports programs, Fraser-Thomas, Côté, and Deakin, found that youth gain many benefits regarding physical development, psychological development, social development, and intellectual development (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Fraser-Thomas, Côté, and Deakin's research indicates that social recreational activities help in all aspects of a child's development. Not only does it help with their development but by having social recreation activities in youth organizations it also gives youth opportunities to participate in activities they normally would not due to rising costs.

## **SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY**

For this study, the researcher used the naturalistic inquiry approach to gather information regarding the experiences and benefits by alumni's participation in the Keystone Club program. "Naturalistic research seeks to maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about the content" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 33). The methods used closely followed those used by Bruce in her study of Texas 4-H Council members in 2003.

In order to retrieve the specific information regarding the Keystone Club, the researcher used purposive sampling, more specifically convenience sampling, to obtain subjects for the study. "Purposive and directive sampling through human instrumentation increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researchers ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 82). Convenience sampling is when the researcher needs to 'save money, time, or effort' (Lincoln et al., 1985, p. 102). In this study, the researcher asked Boys & Girls Club staff from Bryan and College Station to identify alumni for whom they still had contact information and would be likely to participate in the research. This was convenient as the researcher was able to save both time and effort in having to locate alumni and most of the alumni still lived locally. The study focused on 14 individuals who had participated in either the Keystone Club program and/or the Boys & Girls Club program in the cities of Bryan or College Station, Texas

The researcher used the interview method to collect data on the alumni's experiences and benefits gained through the regular Boys & Girls Club programs as well as the Keystone Club program. All alumni were contacted initially by email or by phone depending on the contact information provided by the Boys & Girls Club staff member. Alumni were asked to participate in the research study and to schedule an interview to be conducted either in person or by telephone. Participation in the interview was voluntary. Each alumnus was informed of their rights as human subjects in the research and was asked to sign a consent form acknowledging their voluntary participation and approval to use a recording device. A total of seven Keystone Club alumni and seven Boys & Girls Club alumni were interviewed. The interviews stopped after the data started to repeat itself. The researcher coded all interviews to establish confidentiality. In this study, the researcher coded male participants as (M) and female participants as (F). In addition, interviews were coded to identify those alumni who participated in the Keystone Club program: Yes Keystone (YK) or No Keystone (NK). The interview questions were designed by the researcher and reviewed by a panel of experts in youth development and for content and face validity.

Data analysis was conducted utilizing the methods described in Bruce's study (2003). Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen describes qualitative data analysis as an ongoing process, one that starts the minute you start your collection methods (1993). During the data analysis, the researcher continues to refine the themes of the interviews in order to reach the research goals. Continually refining and analyzing the information allows the researcher to make improvements and validate the study along the way. The

data analysis method used by the researcher was adopted from Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method for naturalistic inquiry.

The researcher adapted the constant comparative method by following this outline: utilization of data, categorization of units, merging categories, defining the construction, and journaling. The information, findings, and conclusions in this study are based on the 'stories' provided by the Boys & Girls Club and Keystone Club alumni. The report reflects their experiences and skills learned by each individual.

It is crucial for the researcher to establish trustworthiness in order to conduct a credible, sound study. Valid inquiry must "demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 29).

Credibility, as described by Erlandson, is "related to the degree of confidence in the 'truth' that the findings of a particular inquiry have for the subjects with which – and the context within which – the inquiry was carried out" (1993, p. 29). There are seven methods to establish credibility in a naturalistic study, these methods include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling. In this study the researcher used referential adequacy, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling to establish credibility.

Transferability establishes the applicability of a study (Lincoln et al., 1985). In order to determine transferability a researcher can use thick description, purposive sampling, and reflexive journaling. In this study, the researcher used all three methods.

In order for a naturalistic inquiry to be dependable it must be consistent. The study must provide evidence (i.e. audit trail) in order for the audience to replicate the study if necessary. The researcher in this study used an audit trail and reflexive journaling to keep adequate records throughout the study and to determine dependability.

Confirmability is the process of checking to make sure the findings in the study are true to the alumni's thoughts and not the biases of the researcher. To establish confirmability, the researcher used reflexive journaling, peer debriefing, and confirmability audit (Erlandson et al., 1993, pps. 35, 143).

## **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EACH RESEARCH QUESTION**

The Keystone Club is a program developed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America with the goal in developing young teens and preparing them for life after high school. It is essential for teens to develop leadership and communication skills, learn how to work with people of different backgrounds, learn to set goals and accomplish them, and to learn the importance of giving back to their community (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005; Scales, Benson, & Leffert, 2000).

### *Question One*

The first research question explored the Keystone Club's impact on the development of leadership skills and character in youth.

1. All seven alumni gained leadership traits through their experience in the Keystone Club. Leadership traits included patience, confidence, respect, altruism and encouragement as just a few named by the alumni. Alumni were motivated to be leaders to the younger members of the Boys & Girls Club and through service projects and fundraisers at the Club.

My recommendation is for the Keystone Clubs to continue to encourage Keystoneers to be leaders in their Club and community. Many just need to have someone believe in them and to put them in leadership roles. With support of advisors, staff, and volunteers, the Keystoneers were able to experience new leadership roles and overcome new challenges.

2. Six of the seven Keystone Club alumni held leadership positions in the community and in the high school. Through the Keystone Club, alumni had the opportunity to take on leadership positions as President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. However, most clubs have more than four youth involved in the Club.

My recommendation for Keystone Clubs is to continue having the four leadership positions as Executive Committee members but then also give remaining Keystoneers leadership opportunities as well. From those in the study, the majority of the officers held a position during their Junior and Senior years. I would also recommend the Keystone Club to implement additional roles for the Freshmen and Sophomores in order for them to start taking on leadership responsibilities. Additional positions could include hospitality chair, web-page designer, social coordinator, and historian.



3. All the Keystone Club alumni said the program impacted them and their ability to lead groups. Through attending leadership conferences and seminars, and serving on national committees, all seven alumni said that they are now able to lead groups through their experience in the Keystone Club. Public speaking helped build their self-confidence to speak in front of groups and to build their facilitation skills.

My recommendation for the Keystone Club is two-fold. Firstly, clubs should send all Keystone Club members to conferences focusing on leadership. The alumni were really impacted by motivational speakers at the conferences and were challenged to be leaders, something they each took with them to their careers. If funding to out of state conferences are not feasible, I recommend hosting local mini-conferences on leadership for both the Keystone Club members and other youth in the community. Secondly, give all students leadership responsibilities regardless of age; whether it's being a chair or leading a group activity, let students experience leadership. Practice makes perfect, let the students experience new opportunities and to find their role as a leader.

### *Question Two*

The second question looked at the Keystone Club's influence on alumni career path and community investments.

1. Five of the seven alumni participated in career seminars and/or trainings provided either by Keystone Conferences, school districts, or the Boys &

Girls Club. Career trainings discussed résumé building, the application and interview process, and professional instruction of various career paths.

My recommendation for the Keystone Club is to continue the Job Ready Program that the Boys & Girls Clubs of America offers to clubs. The program was well received by alumni and mentioned several times as a program that impacted their lives. It taught them real-life work experience and allowed them the opportunity to go through an interview process. I would like to also recommend that Keystone Club take a field trip every year to a Junior College or University in a near-by city. If the opportunity is available, allow the Keystoners to partner with an organization on campus to shadow students for a day on campus in the summer. This allows students to see college life, to talk with college students, and to eliminate any fears they may have about continuing their education.

2. Six of the seven alumni said that the Keystone Club impacted their career.

Only one student said that the Keystone Club had no affect on his career path but even the student was influenced to continue his higher education to accomplish his career goal. The Keystone Club helped alumni discover occupations and what they are passionate for.

My recommendation for the Keystone Club is to bring a variety of professionals to the club to talk and demonstrate what they do for a living. Allow youth the opportunities to explore new avenues and career possibilities outside of their immediate home environment. Provide career days at the club and have professionals on hand such as a chef, pilot, mechanic, doctor, lawyer, teacher, musician, and a nonprofit/government

worker. Discover the interests of the youth and bring the professionals that match their interest to speak to them. If available, coordinate a job shadow day for the youth to shadow a professional for a day at their place of work. Youth want to be inspired to continue their education and the best way for them to be inspired is to meet and speak with someone from their occupation of interest. The important thing to note is that the Keystone Club program is doing a great job of inspiring youth to continue their education and to get careers. The club needs to be aware of all youth's aspirations and help them achieve their goals.

3. Two of the seven alumni received scholarships through the Boys & Girls Club to help finance their college education. The Keystone Club program is a great organization for teens to be involved in as they approach college. For the two who received the scholarships, it helped them go to school and to follow their dreams.

My recommendation for the Boys & Girls Club is to market the scholarship opportunities available for the Keystone Club members. When studying education and career opportunities, the Keystone Club should focus specifically on ways to fund college for a week or two. Involve school counselors, financial departments, and volunteers to help youth continue their education, apply for scholarships, grants, and loans. Boys & Girls Club members, in general, need to know that there are affordable ways to go to college.

4. Every alumnus talked about their role models growing up in the Club. All seven Keystone Club alumni said that their advisor and/or director of the club was one of their role models. The advisors took time to get to know each

member, their families, and their school situation. They supported the students, attended special functions, and cheered them on in life. For several of the alumni, their advisors changed every year they were involved in the Club and yet they were still impacted by each one.

Role models and mentors are clearly needed growing up. For many, the best role models may be found at organizations such as the Keystone Club. Despite the fact that some of the advisors were with the members a short amount of time, Keystone Club alumni still learned from them, still looked up to them and as one person said “learned different ways to be a leader”. Youth are much more resilient than we give credit for and they may find good in unexpected changes. My recommendation to the Keystone Club is to emphasize to staff and volunteers that they are making a difference in the lives of the youth. Even if it is for one year, it could be the best year of a teen’s life and they can make a difference. Allow time for staff and volunteers to build relationships, send groups on day trips, dinner outings, and other social recreational activities. Relationships were built between club members and volunteers through these social types of activities as well.

5. Seven out of seven alumni had the opportunity to travel outside of the state through the Keystone Club. For the majority, travels were limited to the state of Texas and sometimes to the Bryan/College Station area. Having the opportunity to step on a plane for the first time and go to a different state was huge for the Keystoneers.

My recommendation to Keystone Clubs is to provide new experiences for the youth each year. Whether it's traveling to a new college campus, major league baseball game, or traveling out of state, give them the opportunity to go somewhere new. For many of them this was their only opportunity to experience life outside of their home. With new experiences and traveling having an impact on the Keystoneers lives, clubs should continue with trips and should inquire reasonable and doable activities for the Keystoneers to participate in.

6. Four of the seven alumni experienced once-in-a-lifetime opportunities as a Keystoneer. Whether it was meeting a Governor, their idol, or leading thousands of youth in a national conference, it made an everlasting impression on each of their lives.

My recommendation to the Keystone Club is to continue to encourage youth to participate in new experiences and to challenge themselves. With each once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the four youth, it was a reward to a challenge they had placed on their lives. Life changing experiences may only occur several times in a lifetime and clubs need to always be on the look out for the opportunities that can change a child's life. Encourage youth to get involved in other activities, to try out for a team, and to apply for college. Be their number one cheerleader and believe in them.

### *Question Three*

The third question determined if the Keystone Club was a successful program. As stated earlier, the Keystone Club manual mentions four goals for teens in the

program: to develop leadership and communication skills, learn how to work with people of different backgrounds, learn to set goals and accomplish them, and to learn the importance of giving back to their community (TeenSupreme Keystone Manual, 2005; Scales, Benson, & Leffert, 2000). In order to answer this question, I evaluated the four goals with the data collected from the study. Below is proof that the Keystone Club is an excellent program and very successful in the eyes of its alumni and data.

#### Leadership and Communication Skills

1. All seven alumni stated that they gained leadership skills through the Keystone Club. It was unanimous between the alumni that they saw improved leadership skills during their time in the Keystone Club and has continued to be leaders to this day.

I would recommend to the Keystone Club to continue their current leadership training because it is obviously working for the youth involved. I would also recommend hosting mini-leadership trainings for non-Keystone Club members to participate in as all youth have the potential to be leaders when given the right opportunities. This would not only strengthen the Keystoners in producing a day workshop but also would help recruit new youth to the Keystone Club.

2. Seven of the seven alumni learned how to interact and network with others. Especially for the shy and timid members, learning to network and to meet new people is often a challenge. Through the many activities with other Keystone Clubs and community members, the Keystoners built confidence in their

networking capabilities allowing them to enter the next phase of their lives with this skill mastered.

For this, I would recommend clubs to keep the Keystone Club members interacting with new people on a regular basis. Have the youth meet board members, community council members, and other youth their age from different parts of the region and nation. Practice makes perfect and as they meet new people they soon learn that they are able to network, to communicate, and to respect each other. The Keystone Club alumni in this study said that the club gave them opportunities to meet new people and interact with people they thought were intimidating (council members, donors, etc.) but through guidance and practice they were able to have conversations with extraordinary people in their minds.

3. Three of the seven alumni said that the Keystone Club helped them break out of their shell as they were real shy. One of the seven said that their mom signed them up for the Boys & Girls Club and more specifically encouraged her to join the Keystone Club to help her overcome the shyness. She ended up taking on leadership roles all four years in the Keystone Club.
4. Five of the seven alumni said that the Keystone Club helped with public speaking and improving their speaking skills.

My recommendation for the Keystone Club would be to continue encouraging youth to try new experiences and to challenge them to stretch their skills. Advisors should watch for strengths of each Keystoner to see where individuals can be put into leadership roles and to help overcome fears such as speaking in front of groups.

### Work with People of Different Backgrounds

1. Seven of the seven alumni said they participated in activities that united the community and/or the club members but three of the seven said that they never identified specific areas in their club or community that needed improved unity.

My recommendation for clubs is to spend a meeting or two specifically talking about unity and the meaning of the concept. Some alumni were unaware of “Unity” as being a core area of the Keystone Club. All alumni participated in events that led to uniting people, but that was not necessarily their ultimate goal. The older alumni were completely unaware of the core area but the younger alumni had an idea of the concept. Keystone Clubs need to be more translucent when approaching the subject of unity and how the Keystone Club can unite its members, the Boys & Girls Club, and/or the community.

1. Seven of the seven Keystone Club alumni learned how to interact with people of different cultures, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status. Social recreation activities helped the alumni learn to interact, value, trust, and respect the members different from them. They learned to treat each other the same and to be non-judgmental. This has helped all alumni in their careers and being able to understand where people are coming from, to be sympathetic, and to value each other.

My recommendation for the Keystone Club is to continue implementing projects, games, and activities to mix and mingle all youth in the club. The club is a great place for youth to overcome fears with people different from themselves. Staff and volunteers



should always keep the mix in mind in order for youth to appreciate each other.

Keystone Clubs, in conjunction with the unity core area, should invest time in learning about different cultures and beliefs. This helps the youth become aware of different backgrounds and beliefs.

### Setting Goals

1. Seven out of the seven alumni said that the Keystone Club taught them how to set goals and follow time lines in order to achieve the goals. In order for the Keystoners to go on trips they had to raise money to pay for expenses. By doing so, they learned how to set goals, and follow a timeline to obtain their reward. They also learned to set goals for their personal life regarding education and career aspirations.

My recommendation to the Keystone Club is to keep free enterprise and fundraising in the program. The youth learned the value of money, that it takes hard work to earn money but in the end it is well worth the time and energy. They learned to budget the money and their time. All skills they took with them into their careers. Avoid having one fundraiser to raise money and then allowing the Boys & Girls Club to pick up the rest of the expenses. All the alumni participated in more than one fundraiser throughout the year to earn the needed money for their trips. It did not always cover the entire cost of the trip, but they worked hard for the money and put all their efforts into raising the money. Let the youth have a voice in setting goals and planning fundraiser events.

2. Six of the seven alumni said that the Keystone Club impacted their career. Only one student said that the Club had no affect on his career path but even the one student was influenced to continue his higher education to accomplish his career goal. The Keystone Club helped alumni discover occupations and what they were passionate for in life.

My recommendation for Keystone Clubs is to bring a variety of professionals to the club to talk and possibly demonstrate what they do for a living. Allow youth the opportunities to explore new avenues and career possibilities outside of their immediate home environment. Provide career days at the club and have professionals on hand such as a chef, pilot, mechanic, doctor, lawyer, teacher, musician, and nonprofit/government worker. Discover the interests of the youth and bring relevant people to them. Youth need to be inspired to continue their education and the best way for some of them is to meet and speak with someone from their occupation(s) of interest. The important thing to note is that the Keystone Club program is doing a great job of inspiring youth to continue their education and to get careers. The Club needs to be aware of all youth's aspirations and help them achieve their goals

#### Giving Back to the Community

1. All seven alumni participated in service projects as a Keystone Club member.
2. Five of the seven Keystone Club alumni said serving their community gave them a passion to continue volunteering in their future. Although five only stated the passion to serve as adults, all seven actually volunteer on a regular

basis serving as board members and committee members of nonprofit organizations.

My recommendation for the Keystone Club is to continue finding ways to incorporate service to their club or community. In addition, clubs should look at partnering with other agencies to allow youth the opportunity to see other nonprofit organizations and be able to help those outside of their own club. Another idea would be to host volunteer days for various organizations and invite other students (non-Keystone Club members) to take part in the service.

3. Four of the seven alumni currently volunteer at a Boys & Girls Club in their area while two of the seven have continued serving the club through careers in the movement. In all, six of the seven have continued their connection to the Boys & Girls Club.

The Boys & Girls Club and especially the Keystone Club has impacted the members to continue serving and strengthening the Boys & Girls Clubs across the nation. My recommendation for the Keystone Club is to utilize the club as a training ground for potential staff and volunteers for the future. Form alumni associations to keep Keystone Club members in contact with the club and keep them involved in various activities.

#### *Question Four*

The final question compared the impact on the Boys & Girls Club alumni with the alumni from the Keystone Club. As in question three, in order to answer this

question I referred to the four goals of the Keystone Club and compared it with the experiences of Boys & Girls Club alumni to see if there was a difference between the two.

\* = Same as Keystone Club Alumni

### Leadership and Communication Skills

1. All seven\* Boys & Girls Club alumni learned leadership skills through the Boys & Girls Club. Traits such as dependability, honesty, trust, sportsmanship and confidence were mentioned by the alumni.
2. All seven Boys & Girls Club alumni held leadership positions through the Boys & Girls Club. Leadership positions included team captains, junior staff members, and Youth of the Year recipients. This differs by one alumnus more than the Keystone Club.
3. Five of the seven Boys & Girls Club alumni learned how to interact and network with others in the community. They learned how to work as a team and how to make friends. This differs by two alumni less than the Keystone Club.
4. Two of the seven Boys & Girls Club alumni said that the club helped them overcome timidity and to break out of their shell. Through public speaking engagements, leading tours, commercial advertisement, and facilitating club programs, the alumni were able to overcome their shyness. This differs by one alumnus less than the Keystone Club.

Both the Keystone Club and the Boys & Girls Club impacted their alumni through leadership and communication skills.

#### Work with People of Different Backgrounds

1. Like the Keystone Club alumni, all seven\* alumni of the Boys & Girls Club learned how to interact with different cultures by being members of the club. They learned how to accept people for who they were and to not be judgmental. For two of the alumni, integration of the schools occurred while being a member of the club. The Boys & Girls Club was the only place of integration at the time which enabled the two alumni to become leaders of their new integrated schools because they already knew each other and had already played together at the club.

Both alumni from the Keystone Club and the Boys & Girls Club learned how to interact and work with people of different backgrounds. They learned to treat each other the same, to be non-judgmental, and to respect each other.

#### Setting Goals

1. Two of the seven Boys & Girls Club alumni mentioned learning how to set goals and work towards achieving them through the Boys & Girls Club. This differs by five alumni less than the Keystone Club.
2. Five of the seven Boys & Girls Club alumni said that the club impacted their career path. This differs by one alumnus less than the Keystone Club.

Even though the Boys & Girls Club alumni learned to set goals and that the club impacted their career paths, both were not as impacting as the alumni from the Keystone Club. My recommendation for the Boys & Girls Club is to implement goal setting and its importance through the various programs offered at the club. Some of the Boys & Girls Club learned to set goals but not as many as those in the Keystone Club program. An example would be to set a goal to read a certain number of books each month. Allow students to decide on a timeline, the books they want to read, and then encourage them to achieve the goal that they set for themselves.

#### Giving Back to the Community

1. Four of the seven Boys & Girls Club alumni participated in service projects at the Boys & Girls Club. This differs by three alumni less than the Keystone Club.
2. Like the Keystone Club, five\* of the seven alumni continue to serve their community as committee members or board members of various nonprofit organizations. However, unlike the alumni from the Keystone Club, two Boys & Girls Club alumni currently do not volunteer in their community due to lack of time.
3. Three of the seven Boys & Girls Club alumni currently volunteer at a club in the area they live while one of the seven has continued serving the club through a career in the Boys & Girls Club movement. In all, four of the seven Boys & Girls Club alumni have continued their connection to the Boys & Girls Club.

This differs by three alumni less than the Keystone Club on both volunteering at the Club and working at the Club.

The Boys & Girls Club, as a whole, does not specifically focus on serving the community like the Keystone Club does. This is one area that differs between the two alumni. The Keystone Club focuses on serving the community where the Club itself does not. Even though some of the Boys & Girls Club alumni continue to volunteer at the club or at other organizations, not as many serve as the alumni from the Keystone Club. My recommendation for the Boys & Girls Club would be to implement a variety of service projects that the entire club membership can participate in to encourage youth to volunteer and give back as adults.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

1. Researchers should look at the leadership positions the alumni have served on or currently serve as adults. I asked about the alumni's leadership roles as a youth and then how they continue to serve their community today. I did not specifically ask about their leadership positions today. By doing so, you can compare leadership roles as a youth to leadership roles as adults and see if their leadership role as a youth influenced their continuation of being in leadership positions an adult.
2. Researchers should ask Keystone Club and Boys & Girls Club alumni if there is anything they would change about their Club experience. In this study, I looked at the impact the Clubs had on their lives but I never asked if there was anything

that they did not enjoy or would change about either program. This would be beneficial for Clubs when evaluating the programs in the future.

3. Regarding scholarships, it would be beneficial to see if youth were more likely to receive scholarships from Boys & Girls Clubs of America or other entities if they were part of the Keystone Club verses just the Boys & Girls Club. This would be beneficial in recruiting new members to the Keystone Club if it proved to provide scholarships to members.
4. Researchers should further investigate the impact the Boys & Girls Club and Keystone Club programs had on those from different ethnicities, income levels, and gender. This would be beneficial to the Clubs for recruiting purposes.
5. Researchers should develop a quantitative study using the 40 Developmental Assets Model and this study to ask alumni specific benefits they received through the Boys & Girls Club and Keystone Club programs. This would be beneficial to see how many people gained the specific assets, which ones were more prominent in each club, and which assets were not gained through the program.



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APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## **Boys & Girls Club Alumni Interview Questions**

### **Personal Information:**

1. At what age did you first join the Boys & Girls Club?
2. What is your current age?
3. Why did you join the Boys & Girls Club?
4. How many years did you participate in the Boys & Girls Club?
5. What additional organized extracurricular activities did you participate in while attending high school?

### **Demographic Information:**

1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - No degree
  - High school diploma/GED
  - Some college
  - Bachelors degree
  - Masters degree
  - Doctorate degree
  - Professional degree
2. What city do you currently live in?
3. What is the name of the company you work for?
  - What is your title?
  - How many years have you worked there?
4. What is your personal income level?
  - Less than \$10,000
  - \$10,000 to \$14,999
  - \$15,000 to \$24,999
  - \$25,000 to \$49,999
  - \$50,000 to \$74,999
  - \$75,000 to \$99,999
  - \$100,000 to \$149,999

- \$150,000 to \$200,000
- More than \$200,000

### **Service to Club and Community**

1. Describe the activities you participated in regarding service to your Club and Community?
2. How have you continued in your service to your community?

### **Character and Leadership Development**

1. What role, if any, did the Boys & Girls Club play in your leadership development?
  - a. Describe what leadership skills you felt like you developed from your Boys & Girls Club involvement?
2. What role, if any, did the Boys & Girls Club play in your character development?
  - a. Describe what character traits you felt like you developed from your Boys & Girls Club involvement?
3. Describe the activities that you participated in to help build character and leadership skills?
4. Did you ever hold a Boys & Girls Club officer or Jr. Staff position? If yes, what was your position and for how many years did you serve in the position?

### **Education and Career Exploration**

1. What role, if any, did the Boys & Girls Club play in your choice of career?
2. Describe the activities the Boys & Girls Club provided for you to participate in that led to your education and career path?

### **Social Recreation**

1. Describe the recreational activities your Boys & Girls Club provided for you regarding social recreation (sports, social activities, field trips, etc.) within your Club?

2. What role, if any, did the recreational activities play on your group dynamic and interaction with other members?

**Overall Experience**

1. Describe the impact Boys & Girls Club has made on your life?
2. Describe the involvement of your Boys & Girls Club staff.
3. Describe any role models you encountered in the Boys & Girls Club.
4. Would you recommend the Boys & Girls Club to children and youth?



## **Keystone Club Alumni Interview Questions**

### **Personal Information:**

1. At what age did you first join the Boys & Girls Club?
2. How old were you when you first participated in Keystone Club?
3. What is your current age?
4. Why did you join the Keystone Club?
5. How many years did you participate in the Keystone Club?
6. What additional organized extracurricular activities did you participate in while attending high school?

### **Demographic Information:**

1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - No degree
  - High school diploma/GED
  - Some college
  - Bachelors degree
  - Masters degree
  - Doctorate degree
  - Professional degree
1. What city do you currently live in?
2. What is the name of the company you work for?
  - What is your title?
  - How many years have you worked there?
3. What is your personal income level?
  - Less than \$10,000
  - \$10,000 to \$14,999
  - \$15,000 to \$24,999
  - \$25,000 to \$49,999

- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 to \$200,000
- More than \$200,000

### **Service to Club and Community**

1. Describe the activities you participated in regarding service to your Club and Community?
2. Through your Keystone Club experience and learning the importance of service, how have you continued in your service to your community?

### **Character and Leadership Development**

1. What role, if any, did the Keystone Club play in your leadership development?
  - a. Describe what leadership skills you felt like you developed from your Keystone Club involvement?
2. What role, if any, did the Keystone Club play in your character development?
  - a. Describe what character traits you felt like you developed from your Keystone Club involvement?
3. Describe the activities that you participated in to help build character and leadership skills?
4. Did you ever hold a Keystone Club officer position? If yes, what was your position and for how many years did you serve in the position?

### **Education and Career Exploration**

1. What role, if any, did the Keystone Club play in your choice of career?
2. Describe the activities the Keystone Club provided for you to participate in that led to your education and career path?

### **Unity**

1. What areas did your club identify as needing improved unity?

2. Describe the activities your Keystone Club provided for you in unifying Club members and the community?
3. Describe how, if applicable, your experience in the Keystone Club regarding unity has helped you work with others in your career?

### **Free Enterprise**

Free enterprise is defined as a private business operating competitively for profit.

1. Describe your experience in developing and implementing a business in the Club?
2. What role, if any, has your knowledge of free enterprise played in your career?
3. Describe the activities your Keystone Club provided for you regarding free enterprise within your Club?

### **Social Recreation**

1. Describe the recreational activities your Keystone Club provided for you regarding social recreation (sports, social activities, field trips, etc.) within your Club?
2. What role, if any, did the recreational activities play on your group dynamic and interaction with other members?

### **Overall Experience**

1. Describe the impact Keystone Club has made on your life?
2. Describe the involvement of your Keystone Club advisor.
3. Describe any role models you encountered in the Keystone Club.
4. Would you recommend the Keystone Club to a teenager?

APPENDIX B  
EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE INTERVIEWEES

Hi [Participant Name],

My name is Tami Swigert and I work at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley and I'm also a master's student at Texas A&M University. I am conducting a study of approximately 40 individuals who are alumni of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley. Ms. Traci [or Ms. Cheletia] gave me your contact information in hopes that you would be willing to help me with this study.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate alumni's experience in the Boys & Girls Club and how it has impacted their life today.

You have been selected to participate in this research study regarding your experience in the Boys & Girls Club and the influence the program has had on your career and life experiences. You have been selected to be a possible participant because staff at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley identified you as former alumni of their Club. You are invited to consider voluntary participation in the project. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an initial 30 minute to one-hour interview, either by phone or in person, and then you will be asked to review the transcription of the interview for accuracy before analysis begins.

**The interview will be conducted between July 11, 2007 and September 15, 2007.**

The interview will be maintained by myself and kept confidential.

If you would like to schedule an interview or if you have any questions please email me at [tami@bgcbv.org](mailto:tami@bgcbv.org) or you may call me (979)778-2903.

Thank you!

Tami Swigert

## APPENDIX C

### AUDIT TRAIL

## AUDIT CODED BIBLIOGRAPHY

## In Chronological Order of Interview

1. MNK1 Boys & Girls Club Alumni, interviewed July 12, 2007
2. FYK2 Keystone Club Alumni, interviewed July 18, 2007
3. FYK3 Keystone Club Alumni, interviewed July 25, 2007
4. MYK4 Keystone Club Alumni, interviewed July 29, 2007
5. MNK5 Boys & Girls Club Alumni, interviewed July 30, 2007
6. MNK6 Boys & Girls Club Alumni, interviewed August 2, 2007
7. MNK7 Boys & Girls Club Alumni, interviewed August 3, 2007
8. FYK8 Keystone Club Alumni, interviewed August 10, 2007
9. MYK9 Keystone Club Alumni, interviewed August 14, 2007
10. MNK10 Boys & Girls Club Alumni, interviewed August 14, 2007
11. MNK11 Boys & Girls Club Alumni, interviewed August 23, 2007
12. FYK12 Keystone Club Alumni, interviewed August 24, 2007
13. FNK13 Boys & Girls Club Alumni, interviewed August 30, 2007
14. MYK14 Keystone Club Alumni, interviewed September 3, 2007

## VITA

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